This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

43. 709

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGE.

'Where should the living, weeping o'er his woes;
The dying, trembling at the awful close;
Where the betray'd, forsaken, and oppress'd,
The thousands whom the world forbids to rest,
Where should they find, (those comforts at an end,
The Scripture yields) or hope to find a friend?
* * * * * * *
That field of promise; how it flings abroad
Its odour o'er the Christian's thorny road!
The soul, reposing on assur'd relief,
Feels herself happy amidst all her grief,
Forgets her labour, as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song.'

COWPER.

THE

CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGE;

OR

WORDS OF COMFORT

FOR HIS HOURS OF SORROW.

BY THE

REV. DISNEY ROBINSON, M.A.

PERPETUAL CURATE OF WOOLLEY,

IN THE

DIOCESE OF YORK.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God."
Isaiah xl. 1.

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul." Psalm xciv. 19.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO. STATIONERS' HALL COURT,

JAMES NISBET AND CO. BERNER'S STREET:

S. W. THEAKSTON, SCARBOROUGH.

1843.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It having pleased GOD to bless the First Edition of this little volume, and frequent enquiries having been made for it, since the first impression was disposed of, it is *again* sent forth to the world, in the humble hope, that it may *once more*, by the blessing of GOD, accomplish the Author's double object, viz. *to glorify* GOD, *and comfort those who are cast down*:—GOD *is* glorified, when His children are comforted, by *whatever* means He may choose, or by *whatever* instrument He may appoint, for the accomplishment of His will, that His people should be *a comforted people.* [Isaiah xl. 1.] The Author knows not that he has any thing to *retract*: nor has he *added* much: the subjects, of which he has written, are not like those of philosophy and of astronomy: we cannot make *(theoretically at least,* since we have no new Revelation,) any fresh discoveries of the faithfulness of our GOD AND FATHER IN CHRIST JESUS: we cannot add unto it, nor can we

fathom it;—nor can we say that we have *more* to tell of the loving-kindness of the Redeemer, JESUS, IMMANUEL, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; He is *"the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever:"* [Hebrews xiii. 8.] And so of THE HOLY GHOST, the Comforter; as GOD, He has all the attributes of Deity, He is unchanged and unchangeable, the Spirit, who, according to the promise of CHRIST JESUS, shall abide with the people of GOD for ever. [John xiv. 16.]

In thus sending forth a Second Edition of THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGE, the Author is thankful for the assurance, which he has, in many instances, received, that it has been *his* privilege, by the will of GOD, to recall many Christians to a knowledge of true comfort—to a sense of their blessings and privileges in CHRIST JESUS. And that which the LORD *has* done, we would fain hope He will yet be pleased to do, according to the riches of His mercy and grace. In some measure, he sends this little volume into the world, as an arrow from his quiver, and as far as *man* is concerned, he draws *"his bow at a venture;"* but it is with him a subject of Prayer, that it may be seen that he has been permitted to draw from that quiver, whose *"arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies,* (such as *unbelief, weakness of faith, despondency and distrust,)* and *"whereby they shall fall"* under the feet of the Christian mourner, as *vanquished enemies!* [Psalm xl. 5.] He humbly trusts that he shall ONCE MORE be the honoured instrument of speaking *"a word in*

season to him that is weary," or to call to a sense of their high and precious privileges, those who, through *distrust, unbelief, or weakness of faith,* walk in the valley of sorrows, and refuse to be comforted: in the midst of their trials, sufferings and chastisements, he would that they should *now* see and gladly acknowledge that *this* is the true testimony to be borne by all the children of GOD in all His dispensations towards them, *"He led them forth* BY THE RIGHT WAY, *that they might go to a city of habitation:"* and lastly, in the words which follow these, the Author can not but join in the devout wish of the Psalmist, *"Oh! that men would praise* THE LORD *for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."* Psalm cvii. 7—9.

D. R.

Woolley, near Wakefield,
September 10, 1842.

INTRODUCTION.

It will not be to any advantage to the readers of the following pages, to know under what circumstances they were written; I shall therefore purposely omit any detail respecting them, which might or might not be found interesting to them: let it be sufficient for me to state, that they were drawn up for *my own* consolation, and with no ulterior design. Nor is there any reason for me to mention, why I have determined upon canvassing for them a share of the public attention; my chief reasons are such as become my Office, viz.: a desire to promote the glory of God; to vindicate His dispensations; to cheer and console His afflicted people.

In these attempts, I have had three objects in view, i. e. I insist chiefly on these three points:

I. *The whole Bible* being given to us by God, it is not to be received or read by us *partially*, or *without self-application.*

II. *Want of a lively faith* in the promises of God, is a chief *obstacle* to the enjoyment of our privilege.

III. These promises are *the exclusive portion,* and this faith, *the sole privilege* of the *children of God.*

First—With what view do we read the histories of kingdoms and individuals? Is it not, that by their example we may profit; or by their experience understand? We take warning from their fall, we receive wisdom and encouragement from their success, knowing that the one is the fruit of rashness, impiety, and imprudence; the other, of godliness, integrity and caution; and surely, with this object it is, that histories are written. Who then shall say that the Scripture history, the history of the Old Testament especially, is superfluous, or negatively at least, by the neglect of it, to be considered so? Who will maintain that the doctrines and precepts of the New, and historical testimonies of the Old Covenant, are not to be received with equal reverence, or read with equal profit and advantage? *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."** Is it not also plainly declared, that the things which happened to the Fathers, *"happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition?*† This is indeed the express declaration of St. Peter, when speaking

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † 1 Cor. x. 11.

of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha; God thus, he says, *"making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."** By God's dealings with *others,* do we not discover what will be His dealings with *us?* For He is unchangeable; His Word and His promises are sure and steadfast, abiding for ever; His Omniscience is as universal now, as it was in the days of the children of Israel, when He thus spake, *"I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows."*† May not His people now therefore, His spiritual Israel, rely safely and securely on His watchful providence and paternal cognizance of their burdens and their sorrows, for of Himself He says *"I am the Lord, I change not!"*‡

And to prove, among many other instances, the identity and indivisible connexion which exists between the Old and New Testaments, and by which we may be assured how great is the guilt of neg-

* 2 Peter ii. 6. Thus also Eliphaz admonishes Job, by reminding him of the Deluge, as a standing warning to a careless world; *"Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood?"* Job xxii. 15, 16. And this instance of God's wrath against sin and sinners, as well as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, we well remember to have been alluded to, with much earnestness, by our Saviour. Luke xvii. 27, &c.

† Exodus iii. 7. ‡ Mal. iii. 6.

lecting either, the doctrines of *the New* are fully contained and set forth in *the Old:* thus, "*the just shall live by his faith,*"* is a promise which applied originally to the Jews in their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean; many, doubtless, among them were upheld and animated by faith in the promise of a gracious return, while the performance of it was deferred; but, as if to show that man must "*live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord,*"† and that which was written to, and applied by, the people of *one* age, was likewise written for, and is to be applied by, the people of *every* age, these words are cited by St. Paul, in three distinct places, in proof of the great doctrine of *justification by faith,* and of the influence which this grace has upon the Christian.‡

There are those who neglect very much the books of the Old Testament; others there are, who will select the prophetical, but overlook the historical parts of it. Who art thou, that thou shouldst so discriminate and distinguish between the several parts of that which God has given us as *a whole,* to the rejection and disparagement of the rest? Shall the creature say to the Creator, "*this I will read,* for it applies to the disciples of Jesus Christ, and is recorded in the New Covenant for them: *this I will not read,* for it relates to the history of

* Hab. ii. 4. † Deut. viii. 3.
‡ Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38.

the Jews under the Old Covenant; or it is prophetical, and I fear to exercise myself in matters which are too high for me?" Oh! if I speak to professing Christians, I conjure you, do not so madly, do not yourself so great an injury, deprive not yourself of that which is intended by God to afford inexhaustible consolation, under every species of distress, every variety of woe. Tell me, where should the people of God betake themselves, in the hours of their sadness, but to the records of His love, to His own most precious Word, and there read, there meditate upon His dealings with mankind, even from the first foundation of the world, calling to mind and *"considering the days of old, the years of ancient times."** and pleading them with God in prayer, encouraged by His own most gracious remembrance of, and reference to, them, *"Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and His people."* † &c.

Secondly—Want of *faith* in the promises of God, is a chief *obstacle* to the enjoyment of our privilege;

* Psalm lxxvii. 5.

† Isaiah lxiii. 11—14. I am aware that it is not agreed upon by Commentators, whether the people of Israel, or GOD, is here to be understood as spoken of by the prophet; i. e. whether it be the former, reading the history of their fathers' deliverance from Egypt, and therefore taking more earnest heed unto it; or whether it be Jehovah, putting Himself, as it were, in mind of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In either case, it is fraught with encouragement to the Christian; for the Lord *did* help His servant Israel, and *will* help His chosen Israel, *"in remembrance of His mercy."* Luke i. 54.

or, to speak more plainly, there is a sad mixture of *unbelief*, and *a weariness in waiting upon God*, which tend to damp our expectations of a gracious answer to our prayers. How can we do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Surely He, who has bidden us *pray* unto Him expects that we fail not to *look* unto Him for an answer to our petitions, and not that we should dishonour Him, by distrusting His promise, or disbelieving His readiness to hear us; surely, we deprive ourselves of much peace, and bring distress and disquietude upon our minds, which God, for His part, has mercifully provided against; we raise up clouds of our own creation, phantacies of our own devising, fears, doubts and discouragements of our own exciting: and all this in despite of

'The soul-quickening words, Believe and live.'*

We may be sure that the delay rests with ourselves, for we have the warrant of the Lord in His word, that we have but to *ask* and we shall *have*, to *seek* and we shall *find*, to *knock* and it shall *be opened* to our importunity; only let us pray, dear reader, *in faith*, through Jesus Christ, nothing doubting; only let us *continue asking, seeking, knocking, waiting:* we shall at length be heard and answered; *how and when* we must leave to His wisdom, who has our

* Cowper, TRUTH, Line 31.

interest and happiness in view as much as His own glory.

Consider 'how often we treat our Almighty Friend as a stranger! as if we were weary of dealing with Him; and when we do declare our ways before Him, are we not often content to leave it as a matter of uncertainty, whether He has heard us or not? We think too little of the importance of *watching* for an answer to our prayers; it is such an encouragement for us to *pray again;* it gives such a sweetness to the mercies received, when they come to us with this inscription, *"received by prayer."** Which of us, having once experienced the goodness of the Lord, (and which of us has not?) will refuse to add his grateful testimony, and say, *"I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications, because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live?"*† Or which of us has not abundant reason to chide his unbelief and want of faith? for truly we cannot but observe, even in the established Christian, how weak sometimes is his faith, how cold his affections, how partial his surrender of himself and his affairs unto God, and how unbelief is mixed up with his best services! The bow which glitters in the heaven's "high arch," never fails to remind us of God's Covenant with him, who *"found grace in His sight,"* and by it, as a token and a pledge, we call to mind, and unfeignedly

* Bridges on Psalm cxix. 26. † Psalm cxvi. 1.

believe, His promise, that "*all flesh shall not be cut off any more by the waters of a flood:*"* But we must confess, how differently we are apt to regard the bow of the New Covenant, "*the promises of God in Christ are in Him, yea, and in Him, amen.*"† 'By the same Word,' which we steadfastly believe, and on which we securely depend, as a pledge against the return of a similar judgment, is held out to us the promise of a favourable reception at the throne of grace; 'by the same Word' we are assured, (and but for our *unbelief*, we should *rejoice* at the assurance) that His arm, at whose call the waters rose, at whose rebuke they fled, and by whose powers they are restrained, is ever ready to be outstretched in our behalf, His ear ever open to our prayers, and His mercy ever waiting, only waiting for our acceptance; lastly, 'by the same Word,' by a covenant, as sure and perpetual, by a bow of remembrance as gracious and as merciful, upon which it pleases the Lord to look with faithfulness and love, we know, (and but for our *fears* and *distrust*, we should *profit* by the knowledge) that He is a God unchangeable, who cannot deny Himself, and that Jesus Christ, through whom we profess to offer up our prayers, and with whom to leave them, is "*the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*"‡ Shame then, Christians, be on us! this is the way of the worldling, who relies implicitly and securely on the promise, that the

* Gen. ix, 11. † 2 Cor. 20.
‡ Heb. xiii. 8.

world shall not again be "*overflowed, and perish by the waters,*" but will be slow of heart to believe (or believing, will *disregard)* the assurance, that "*the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*"* Oh! then, "*beloved, be not ignornant of this one thing,*" that is only a lamentable *defect in our faith,* a want of *a waiting spirit,* and a *fervent uplooking* through Christ, unto God, added to an over anxiety and impatience, if our petitions be seemingly disregarded, that we must attribute that failure of *rejoicing in prayer,* which God would have us habitually experience.

Third.—Lastly, I must maintain, in order to guard against delusion and self-deceit, that these promises of which we speak, and this faith, by which the justified live, are *the sole privilege and portion of the children of God.* God always speaks of them, as of some peculiar and privileged persons, for whom He has a love and a tender regard: it is for these therefore to claim as their own, those "exceeding great and precious promises," with which the Word of God is so richly fraught; it is for these to know and experience "*what is the exceeding greatness of His power,*"† manifested and exerted in their behalf; for them, "*the field of promise*" is laid open, in which they alone are privileged to enter, whence

* 2 Peter iii. 7. † Ephes. i. 19.

they alone are enabled to draw comfort, and enjoy an assurance of rest, happiness and "*perfect peace.*" They alone can say, "*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.*"*

I well know, that many in their affliction, when "*distress and anguish cometh upon them,*"† are ready enough to betake themselves to the Bible, expecting to participate in the goodly heritage of the people of the Lord; hasty indeed are they to call upon Him, when they find themselves sinking and ready to perish; then they bethink themselves of *the promises,* and claim them as their own—because, only because they are in trouble and affliction. Thus will they, who have reported evil of the promised land, thirst for the grapes of Eshcol; they, who in the days of their prosperity, "*thought scorn of that pleasant land, and gave no credence unto His word,*"‡ will haste in the hour of their sadness, to enter into the fertile and fruitful vallies of the one, and seek for a participation in the blessedness of the other; they will hunger and thirst,—but shall they be filled? If it be true, that "*they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; if they would none of His counsel,*" surely we must expect that "*therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.*"§ If

* Psalm xxiii. 1, 2. † Prov. i. 27.
‡ Psalm cvi. 24, Prayer-book version.
§ Prov. i. 29—31.

God's promises be disregarded, when they are *not* needed, shall they be fulfilled when *they are?* Is there *no* difference to be made between the bond and the free? God forbid that I should seem to exclude any from the privileges and blessings of His Word! My only motive in thus vindicating for God's peculiar people, the exclusive enjoyment of His promises of love and peace, is to set those *who search, but do not find, who ask, but do not receive,* on an inquiry into their pretensions; for as undoubted is the assertion of Christ, that "*except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,*"* so incontrovertible is the truth, that the Bible is a sealed book, and its encouragements a dead letter, unto all, except to those, who are, by adoption and grace, the sons of God. True it is, that *by searching* into the records of God's love, they may be, and oftimes are, by His constraining grace, brought unto a saving knowledge of Him; and this I would repeat for their encouragement, for God indeed forbid, that any should be discouraged from a further and a persevering, prayerful seeking, because they find not *at the first,* that for which they long.

These then are the truths, which I have endeavoured to enforce in the following pages: First, *the whole Bible* must be searched by us impartially, as if written for our *individual* benefit and application. Secondly, through want of *a lively faith*

* John iii. 3.

in God's promises, and defect of *fervent expectation* that our prayers shall be answered, we deprive ourselves of much peace, and the enjoyment of a glorious privilege. Thirdly, this faith is *the exclusive heritage* of the people of God, by which they alone enjoy these promises, as *their exclusive portion.*

And now, with all humility and earnest prayer, do I commend unto the blessing of the Lord, that which has been a comfort and a delight unto myself, a pleasurable exercise when engaged in it, and pleasant likewise in the review. I know that God, by His Holy Spirit, calls forth what instruments He alone pleases, for the *conversion, edification,* or *strengthening* of His people; in dependence therefore on His strength, in the hope, yea, *in the expectation of His blessing,* do I commit my mite into the spiritual treasury, remembering that her services were accepted, who did "*what she could:*"* and while many throw in of their abundance, grateful indeed shall I be, if but one more soul, by my means herein, shall be enabled to trust, cheerfully and fearlessly, in the "*unwearied love*" of our Heavenly Father, live *by faith* in His promises, wait for His mercy, and "*rejoice for the consolations,*" which are held out for the chosen sons and daughters of the Lord, through our only Mediator and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

* Mark xiv. 8.

SUBJECTS OF MEDITATION.

—

		PAGE.
I.	Perfect peace, the result of staying upon God - - - - - -	17
II.	Perseverance in pursuit, to be maintained amid delay and discouragement - - - - - -	22
III.	Yielding to present affliction is unwise, for severer trials may be impending	26
IV.	Necessity of faith for the establishment of our hopes, and an answer to our prayers - - - - - -	30
V.	Hoping against hope - - - -	33
VI.	Waiting upon God only - - - -	37

VII. God, drawing nigh to those who call call upon Him - - - - - 42

VIII. Delight in the Lord, precursive to the attainment of our desires - - 46

IX. Vanity of trusting to human aid - 51

X. Thanksgiving for every dispensation of God's providence - - - 59

XI. Peace, the legacy of Christ to His people - - - - - - 65

XII. Trust in God, an answer to the rebukes or discouragements of friends 74

XIII. Rejoicing in hope - - - - 79

XIV. Fainting in adversity, a sign of the weakness of faith - - - 84

XV. Duty and pleasure of prayer in general, and practical success of ejaculatory prayer - - - - - 90

XVI. Answer to prayer, the removal of our fears, and an encouragement of our hopes - - - - - - 99

XVII. Delay of an answer to our petitions is no proof of their rejection - - 105

XVIII. Resting in the Lord our duty - 112

XIX. Obligation upon us to stand still, and wait the interference of the Lord 117

XX. Working together of all things for good, to the children of God- - 125

XXI. Duty of casting all our cares upon God, and praying with thanksgiving 133

XXII. Happiness in God's corrections - 143

XXIII. Confidence in God, amid desolation 152

XXIV. Impossibility of separation from the love of God in Christ - - - 160

APPENDIX - - - - 171

THE

CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGE.

I.

ISAIAH XXVI. 3.

THOU WILT KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE, WHOSE MIND IS STAYED ON THEE, BECAUSE HE TRUSTETH IN THEE.

In writing professedly to those who are in affliction, will it be thought that I mean to make a mockery of their grief, and design to aggravate their sorrow, by speaking of a *"perfect peace?"* Shall I be accused of wantonly insulting their feelings, by making mention of that which is, apparently, most remote from them, and the very existence of which they may call in question? Or, shall I be in danger of being called *an enthusiast*, if I venture to assert, that peace, that *perfect* peace, is not an invariable *attendant on prosperity*, nor, of necessity, an invariable *fugitive in adversity?* or still more visionary, if I presume to point out, how it may be the constant companion in either, or both, of these states? I

would be well content to have these things laid to my charge, did I maintain such propositions, on my own unsupported authority, or my own single testimony; but whilst that I have the Word of God on the one hand, and the experience of His Children on the other, I need not shrink from the pleasing office, nor fear being able to realize those expectations, which by the grace of God, I would fain excite. May then the blessing of Him, whose words, full of mercy, love, and truth, I proceed to unfold, be abundantly manifested in me who write, and in those who read; or, if this be too much to ask, I would that, by my instrumentality, even *one* afflicted soul, *one* mourner in Zion, might add his grateful testimony, and set to his seal, that the Word of the Lord is true, and giveth peace, even *"perfect peace,"* to the mourning and disquieted spirit.

The words which I now set before you, are the words of assurance, confirmed and strengthened by experience: although they cannot, with precision, be called *a promise,* yet they are, with strictness, and in truth, *equivalent to one:* it is as sure, as if we saw written, *'I the Lord will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on me, because he trusteth in me.'* In this surely there is comfort and encouragement, worthy the Divine Giver of so glorious a promise, and which so far exceeds all that we could dare to ask or think. We read the heathen poet's expression, *'in utrumque paratus,'* (prepared for either fate) to which I only allude, for the purpose of illustrating that promise of which we are speaking.

If your minds be resting and staying upon God, upon His faithfulness, as your hope, as the anchor of your soul, *in prosperity* you shall be kept in "*perfect peace,*" not too much elated, neither anxious, nor disquieted about the continuance of your blessings, because God is your Father, and the most High, He is your refuge: again, if your mind be resting and staying upon God, *in affliction* you shall be kept in "*perfect peace,*" because you shall be taught that "*whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth,*"* and "*though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.*"† And again, when in a state of *doubtful uncertainty* respecting the issue of any important plan, or expected source of happiness, if your mind be resting and staying upon God, and upon His faithfulness, you shall be kept in "*perfect peace,*" because you shall be assured, yea, devoutly persuaded, that "*all things work together for good to them that love God.*"‡

All this shall be the portion of the true believer, in whatever state he may be placed, to whatever trial he may be called, if only he trust in God, *through Jesus Christ, by the aid of the Holy Spirit:* this is the way of access into that grace wherein he shall stand, by which he may rejoice in hope, and be patient in tribulation.§ Oh! what a stay and support is this in the doubtful hours of suspense and anxiety! whatever be the issue, "*perfect peace*" shall

* Heb. xii. 6. † Lam. iii. 32. ‡ Rom. viii. 28.
§ Ephes. ii. 18. Rom. v. 2; xii. 12.

be the Christian's *privilege and portion;* there is no hazard in the die; all, all is certain! and *is all certain? is* peace the fruit of confidence? *is* faith the source *"of quietness and assurance?"* Why therefore, shouldest thou be cast down, and why disquieted within thee, afflicted brother? in the words of the Holy Ghost, I bid thee, *"trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."** The verse preceding this, I said, implies a *promise,* this contains a suitable *direction* founded on that promise. *"Trust in the Lord,"* it is an antidote against a perturbed spirit; *"trust in Him for ever!"* When? in prosperity, in affliction, in doubt, in despair!† Why? *"for in the Lord Jehovah is ever-*

* Isa. xxvi. 4.

† Have we not need to pray unto God to keep us, *in prosperity,* as well as *in adversity?* Have we not need to trust in Him in the time of *wealth,* as much as *in poverty?* Truly we have: *"lest we be full and deny Him, and say, Who is the Lord?"* Prov. xxx. 9. lest we boast of our strength, and glory in our possessions, and thus like the rich fool in the Parable, provoke the anger of the Lord! This lesson our Church teaches us, when she enjoins us, in the Litany, to pray thus, *'In all time of our tribulation,* IN ALL TIME OF OUR WEALTH,—*Good Lord deliver us.'* This sounds but strangely in the ears of those, whose hearts are fixed on the unrighteous mammon, in whom the god of this world hath blinded their eyes, so that they fancy they see salvation in their gold, and strength in their riches! It is recorded, that a member of the Rev. John Newton's Church, on inheriting an unexpected property, thus wisely began his career, by desiring the public intercession of his fellow-Christians in the usual manner, in words like the following; *'A young man lately come into the possession of much wealth, desires the prayers of the congregation.'*

lasting strength?" Are you therefore weak? Be strong and of good courage, for here is One who hath strength, yea, everlasting strength, freely to give you; for *"to them that have no might, He increaseth strength."** Come only in perfect *faith,* and you shall have *"perfect peace;"* only come *"trusting in the name of the Lord, and staying upon your God,"*† and be assured, for I speak by God's grace, *that I do know,* your trust *shall* not, yea, *cannot* be misplaced. God cannot deny Himself; His Word has gone forth, and having received increasing confirmation through successive ages, it must, it will, it cannot but accomplish His gracious purpose in sending it. He need not have promised peace on this side eternity, but having done so, may I not say, with becoming humility and veneration, He stands pledged to bestow it? For indeed, *"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?"*‡ But we must remember whose the promises are; they belong to those only, who trust in His mercy, through Christ Jesus; to those only who submit themselves to Him in filial confidence, and unfeigned resignation: in this then, be confident, *"be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it shall be, even as it is told us."*§

* Isaiah xl. 29. † Isaiah l. 10. ‡ Numbers xxiii. 19.

§ Acts. xxvii. 25.

II.

JUDGES VIII. 4.

FAINT, YET PURSUING.

These words, in their original application, refer to Gideon and his band of three hundred men, in pursuit of the Midianites. The circumstances attending this event are highly interesting and instructive. We read, in the sixth chapter, that the Lord appeared to Gideon, to send him with deliverance, on behalf of the Israelites, against Midian: God, in this to shew His power and the strength of His arm, and that the people of Israel might not *"vaunt themselves against Him, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me,"* ordered Gideon to reduce his army of thirty-two thousand men to the small band of *three hundred;* with this band he put to flight the hosts of *" the Midianites and Amalekites, and all the children of the East, which lay along in the valley, like grasshoppers, for multitude;"* then *"came Gideon to Jordan, he and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them;"* wear-

ied with their exertions, yet trusting to the promise of the Lord, having done much, yet hoping to do more, having been supported thus far, expecting the further assistance of Jehovah, fatigued, but not dispirited, worn down, but not discouraged, *"faint, yet pursuing."*

Is not this an instructive lesson? Is there not here that which is encouraging? Do we not hence learn to persevere with what strength we have, though it be but small, to continue our confidence, and hold on in our pursuit? I consider, that we may especially learn these two things, 1. *In afflictions, trust more to God, than to your own devices.* 2. *Hope unto the end, if faint, yet pursue.* First, trust more to the providence of God, than to your own devices? use means, for means must be used, but do not rely upon them; trust simply to God's blessing on the means which He gives you. Gideon, doubtless, thought that to encounter such an army with thirty-two thousand men, was safer than to venture against them with three hundred only; yet God bid him *reduce* his number; he did not therefore murmur, neither was he afraid, nor did he despair of victory. Neither then do you, when the schemes which you follow, and the plans which you devise, seem thwarted or disappointed, and the means which, *as means*, you trust to, seem circumscribed. Saul thought that his *"helmet of brass and coat of mail"* were necessary to preserve David against the power of Goliah; but *"the stripling"* was content rather to go forth *"in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies*

of Israel;" he would not go with Saul's armour, "*for he had not proved it,*"* the protection and interference of the Lord, he *had* experienced. So then I exhort, be not encumbered with divers plans and imaginations; you have not yet proved your schemes, you are trying them, God's mercies you *have* experienced; I speak advisedly, though it may be, that your life has been one of trial and of sorrow; yet, I say, that mercy has followed you ever since you were born, or where should you now have been? But be not "*careful and troubled about many things;*" one, in the Lord's hand, though it seems not so to you, is all-sufficient; "*for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few:*" † Oh! then, trust simply, wait faithfully, and expect patiently. Secondly, *hope unto the end, if faint, yet pursue.* Gideon and his companions followed the discomfited Midianites to the river Jordan; yet, encouraged by their success, in obedience to the direction, and in faithful dependance on the arm of the Lord, they continued the pursuit, not stopping to punish by the way, the men of Succoth and Penuel, who refused to relieve them. Thus, Christian, continue your pursuit, hold fast your confidence, encouraged by the bestowment of past mercies;‡ not dispirited by the refusal of human aid, nor by the

* See 1 Sam. xvii 38, 39, 45. † 1 Sam. xiv. 6.

‡ Thus we find the Prophet reasoning. "*Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us; for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*" Isaiah xxvi 12.

desertion of friends. There is an appointed time, in which mercy shall visit you; *"though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."** It may be, that the moment in which you give up your faith, may be the one, in which God would shew mercy on you and relieve you; your hour of despair may be the destined hour of victory and of triumph: therefore, I bid you, if troubled on every side, *be not distressed;* if perplexed, *be not in despair:* if persecuted, *you shall not be forsaken;* if cast down, *you shalt not be destroyed; if faint,* yet, in the name of the Lord, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the power of the Spirit, I charge you, *pursue.*

* Hab. ii. 3.

III.

JEREMIAH XII. 5.

IF THOU HAST RUN WITH THE FOOTMEN, AND THEY HAVE WEARIED THEE, THEN HOW CANST THOU CONTEND WITH HORSES? AND IF IN THE LAND OF PEACE, WHEREIN THOU TRUSTEDST, THEY WEARIED THEE, THEN HOW WILT THOU DO IN THE SWELLING OF JORDAN?

Which is the greater, God's patience, or our impatience? God's kindness in His chastenings, or our repinings when chastened? He is not wont to lay upon us more than we can bear, nor (if we truly know ourselves, we shall confess) so much as we deserve. In considering our trials, it were unwise to compare them with the trials of others, for God seeth not as man seeth; but I think it may be a salutary lesson to compare our afflictions *with* our afflictions, i. e. our *present* sorrows, with our *past*, with those which *may* come upon us, and with what we *deserve*.* This seems to be the ready inference of the words which I have chosen for our comfort. The Lord is represented as rebuking His persecuted Prophet, for his uneasiness at his present troubles, and bids him prepare for greater; "*If thou hast run*

* "*Know that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.*" Job xi. 6.

with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?" 'The opposition of the men of Anathoth was not so formidable, as what he must expect from the kings and rulers of Judah; and *the present* calamities of the nation were trivial, compared with the *approaching* desolations. If then he was so discouraged by these *lighter* trials, how would he endure *more severe* afflictions? If he was so wearied with running with footmen, or contending with his equals, how would he be disquieted, when required to run with horsemen, or execute his office in defiance of those in authority?' *"And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"* i. e. 'If he could scarcely endure, when the land (in which he too confidently had expected safety) remained in peace, what would he do when hostile invasions would bear down all before them like the overflowing waters of Jordan?'*

Now apply this reasoning to yourself, suffering Christian, and may the Holy Ghost, while He reproves you, be your especial Comforter. If your present trial be enough, in your idea, to weigh you down, and you be ready to exclaim, in the language of Cain, *"My punishment is greater than I can bear,"*† say, how will you be able to contend against much severer trials, which the Lord, in His wisdom, may inflict upon you? Believe me, there is no cup

* Scott. † Gen. iv. 13.

of affliction so full, but that it may hold one drop more; there is no blow so severe, but that one yet heavier may be impending: if then you suffer your soul to faint, and your knees to wax feeble, how can you stand when much greater is required? If your faith be little now, will it increase by yielding, or grow stronger by defeat?* Surely *"the worm Jacob"* shall not *"thresh the mountains,"*† if you be faithless and dispirited, when you *should be* strong and courageous; if you be declining, when, by Divine aid, you should be claiming and enjoying the victory! Think of David's rashness; He *"said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; and there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand."*‡ This was a hasty conclusion; God had so often interposed in his behalf, that we might reasonably suppose his faith would trust Him yet again, and that he would expect the very reverse of that which he so despondingly anticipated. Consider also Jonah's impious wish when his gourd was

* Much to the purpose is the following extract from Newton. "We know not what is before us: Perhaps we may meet greater difficulties by and by, than we have ever yet seen: but if we keep in mind, who delivered us from the Lion and the Bear, we may face the Philistine also without terror. God will be with us, and strengthen us with strength in our souls. Only it is our wisdom to keep close to Him, that when the day comes we may have confidence before Him in all our troubles."

† See Isaiah xli. 14, 15. ‡ 1 Samuel xxvii. 1.

taken from him and he thought that he had need of it for a shadow from the sun; *"he wished in himself to die, and said 'It is better for me to die than to live.'"** *He forgot Him, who is "a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat."*† Oh! the forbearance of God displayed towards these rebellious servants! Take heed, repining sufferer, lest He spare not thee.

This however I would have you remember, for your everlasting consolation: as a wave of the raging sea, when once gone by, shall not again return to threaten the anxious crew, so, one affliction gone, you shall see its face no more, it is one *taken away* from the appointed number. And bear this in mind, the Lord *rebuked* Jeremiah, but He rebuked him *in mercy*, and kindly admonished him: thus also, from His infinite love and mercy towards you, in Christ Jesus, He has your benefit in view in every chastening: by each He would bring you more closely and devotedly to Himself;‡ and if this desirable end be answered, by the means of trials and bereavements, you will, if you be of that happy number, some time or other,

"Look back and smile
On things that bitterest seem'd erewhile;"

and be enabled, with joyful lips to say, *"The Lord has done all things well."*

* Jonah iv. 8. † Isa. xxv. 4.

‡ "No one of God's dealings towards His chosen hath any other source or spring, but that of Love; it is Love that sends

IV.

ISAIAH VII. 9.

IF YE WILL NOT BELIEVE, SURELY YE SHALL NOT BE ESTABLISHED.

CONSIDER the Apostle's definition of faith: he describes it to be the "*substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;*"* that is, it must be to us instead of *sight*, as if we saw and possessed in prospect, the blessings for which we pray. Now what else do the above words of the Most High signify, if by them He does not plainly declare, that our faith in His assurances must be unfeigned, and our confidence in His word firm unto the end and unshaken? Shall our unquiet spirit be settled, our disordered thoughts established, if we be not willing to take God's word; if our hearts faint within us,

His *severest chastisements*, as well as His *sweetest encouragements*. His smiles and frowns both proceed from the same love; the opposite to this, even His wrath, hath never yet been endured by any one of His justified children." Sermon on 1 Cor. ii. 12; by the Rev. H. B. BULTEEL.

* Heb. xi. 1.

and our eyes fail with looking upwards, because the answer of prayer, or the fulfilment of promise, is not speedy? Can we think to weary God? or shall we, having once put our trust in Him, dare to distrust Him? Observe the manner in which the Saviour of mankind, (He who said, "*Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.*" *) observe how He wrought His Miracles: The impotent man had *faith* to be healed, and he was healed;† the distressed parent "*believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, (Thy son liveth) and he went his way.*"‡ To the leper who said, "*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;*" Jesus answered, "*I will, be thou clean.*"§ But at Nazareth, "*He did not many mighty works, because of their unbelief.*"‖ Remember also the reply of Christ to the doubting Martha; "*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*"¶ The grace of faith, therefore, we surely conclude to be *needful.* Beware then lest through diffidence or unbelief, dear Reader, you account the words of God, negatively at least, as the words of deceit! Will you esteem His promises, His, who is faithful and true, as the promises of *man?* No indeed; this does not become the Christian worshipper; you, by making known your requests, have *pledged your faith and affiance* in the power and love of God to hear and answer them.

* Matt. vii. 7. † Matt. xii. 13. ‡ John iv. 50.

§ Luke v. 12, 13. ‖ Matt. xiii. 58. ¶ John xi. 40.

Be cautious then of distrust, or of drawing back your confidence, as though you repented having placed it in His mercy; do not believe as though you believed not; do not ask as though you asked not, for you *shall* not, nay, you *cannot* receive. Let not unbelief be your hindrance; Jesus Christ interceeds only for the faithful; to whom he says, *"if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."** Do you long for the quieting and composing of your mind, amidst the enemies of your peace? this then I bid you, *"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established."*†

* Mark ix. 23. † 2 Chron. xx. 20.

V.

ROMANS. IV. 18.

WHO, AGAINST HOPE, BELIEVED IN HOPE.

To the unrenewed mind, this fact will appear a paradox; to the believer, renewed in the spirit of his mind, it will appear, as it is in truth, a spring of joy and consolation, having its virtues attested by clouds of witnesses; and herein we discover the difference which exists between these characters, when the day of trial and visitation comes upon them; to the one, hope never comes, but unbelief, disquietude, and misery; to the other, hope is the stay and anchor of the soul; the one *will* not hope, nor will he believe; the other, even *against hope*, will believe and rejoice in hope; of the one, Satan is the Father; the other is numbered amongst the sons of Abraham, the Father of the faithful;* and lastly, the former will, and must indeed, of necessity, yield to despair, or seek refuge in his own devices, trusting to the arm of man; the latter, like his

* Rom. iv. 11. 16.

believing Father, *"will not stagger at the promise of God, through unbelief, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God,"**

Reader, to which of these characters do you belong? Judge by your present trial; consider it as sent to *try your faith*, as Abraham's was; but how great was the faith required of *him*, how trifling is *yours* in comparison: *hope* was against him, *probability* was against him, *the course of nature* was against him, *but not the Word of God, not the oath and promise* of God, *not the Covenant, which Jehovah had made with him;* therefore he was *"not weak in faith"* but was *"fully persuaded, that what He had promised, He was able also to perform."*† Now are any of these things against *you*, as they were against Abraham? I believe, *not one!* whatever your situation be, whatever your affliction, how severe soever your suffering, and how great the trial of your faith, it cannot equal that of the faithful Patriarch: what then hinders but that your faith should equal his? your promises are the same, the same God of mercy and of grace, a God in Covenant with you, if you be Christ's, still waits to be as merciful and gracious unto you; be not then faithless, but believing; hope, yea trust, confidently trust, that the God of mercy will yet open a way for the advancement of your *best interests*, though that way to you shall seem clouded and obscure.‡ When all shall appear

* Rom. iv. 20. † Rom. iv. 19. 21.

‡ I at first wrote "*wishes:*" I recall the word on the au-

dark and forbidding, discern with the eye of faith (for to the child of God is this privilege given) a ray of light gradually dawning, enlivening, animating, reviving. Go then your way; by God's Grace, *against hope,* still *believe* in hope: may He grant you power to glory and rejoice in your tribulation, "*knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed.*"* "Be patient under the means by which your Heavenly Father sees needful to break your bonds to earth: submit to the correction of what may yet remain too human and earthly in your affections in order that your love may become thoroughly purified: you will love God more undividedly."†

The following extract from Luther is an excellent commentary on our subject, and will form an appropriate conclusion. 'The Wisdom of God is to be adored, who, when He is about to accomplish something great and surpassing our hopes, *first*

thority of the Scriptures, which teach me, that God's way is not our way, nor His thoughts our thoughts: and that that which appears in our idea a crown of *happiness*, might, if granted us, prove a crown of *thorns!* 'A good man,' says Charnock, 'shall have what he *needs*, though not always what he *thinks* he needs. Providence intends the supply of our *necessities, not of our desires;* He will satisfy our *wants*, not our *wantonness*. When a thing is not *needful*, a man cannot, properly, be said to *want* it; when it *is* needful, a good man shall not be *without* it.'

* Rom. v. 3. 5.

† Memoirs of Port Royal, Vol. 1, p. 346. 4th. edition.

seems to annihilate all expectation, and to reduce us to despair, as it is written, *"He bringeth down to the grave,* (ad inferos) *and bringeth up again."* He does this, to teach us the exercise of *faith, hope,* and *love* towards Him; and that we may learn to esteem things not seen above those which do appear, and *against hope, to believe in hope,* and to depend on Him, who *"calleth things which are not, as though they were."* Then, while He takes away from us all His most pleasant gifts, and exhibits Himself to us, as if His kindness and His loveliness had come utterly to an end, at that very time He is thinking most especially, and I might almost say, anxiously, the thoughts of Love towards us.'

* Letter to Prince George of Anhalt, on the death of Heldus. See Scott's Continuation of Milner's Church History.

VI.

PSALM LXII. 5.

MY SOUL, WAIT THOU ONLY UPON GOD: FOR MY EXPECTATION IS FROM HIM.

We have here the Psalmist expressing his entire confidence in God, and declaring his reason for it. Can we have a better resource pointed out, or a more persuasive argument for enforcing our application to the same? The soul is the seat of perception; it partakes of the pains of the body, but it has also to bear its own griefs, which are infinitely more acute than those of the body: the power of man cannot control the diseases of the body, the power of the Spirit of God can cause to cease the burdens of a wearied soul: the body may languish through the inefficiency of the means applied; the soul, if directed right, shall never fail of cure, nor seek consolation in vain. This direction David gives us, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, "*My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.*" Hear how, in another Psalm,

he addresses, as it were, his drooping soul: *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."**

But, let us consider more closely, in the first-mentioned words, the direction which he gives to his troubled spirit: he says, in the fulness of assurance, *"My soul, wait thou only upon God."* Many are the reasons which we find in other Psalms; thus, *"It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in Princes."*† And again, *"I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto Thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living."* ‡ Once more, we see how well he knew where to apply for comfort in his distress: *"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in Thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most High; unto God that performeth all things for me."*§ This then is the sum of his experience; 'Be not disquieted, O my soul, nor wearied with waiting; hope thou only in the Lord, for my expectation is from Him, and He is my refuge.'

This remedy must be yours, you who are suffer-

* Psalm xlii. 5. † Ibid. cxviii. 8, 9. ‡ Ibid. cxlii. 4, 5.

§ Ibid. lvii. 1, 2.

ing; whatever be your trial, wait only upon God; whatever your present doubts, difficulties, or causes of despondency, wait only upon God. I would not have you lose the force of the direction which is here given you: 1. *Wait.* 2. Wait *upon God.* 3. Wait *only upon God.*

First observe, that it is your duty and your interest *to wait.* What do you mean by waiting? 'The term '*wait,*' (says an eminent servant of the Lord, who has ceased from his labours, and by God's mercy in Christ, reaps the fruit of his waiting,) the term '*wait,*' implies a simple, dependent, expecting, attentive state of heart; which leads to frequency and perseverance in the use of proper means, notwithstanding delays and discouragements, with a determined rejection of all other confidence, and all inconsistent measures.'* I need not add a word more on this point: therefore,

Secondly, wait *upon God,* for who so able, who so willing to hear your prayers, supply your wants, fulfil your expectations, and repay your waiting? who, besides Him, so powerful, and who so merciful? Did he not create you out of nothing? has He not therefore the power and the desire to preserve the work of His hands? Melancthon concludes one of his letters with mentioning the case of a friend, who had found a cheering relief, under deep affliction, in opening, by apparent accident, on the words, "*He hath made us, and not we ourselves.*" This

* Scott on Psalm xxv. 5.

single reference to Divine Providence, the afflicted person said, seemed to kindle a heavenly light within, which diffused peace through his breast.'* Oh! yes: does not the Lord love His creatures, and therefore does He not wish their happiness? but above all, did He not so love you, as to give His only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for you? and will He not, think you, with Him, freely give you all things?† Do you seek a further proof of His love? Having given the greater, He will not withhold the less; having provided richly for Eternity, He will provide for you in Time also.

Lastly, I bid you, wait *only upon God.* Yes, be careful in this matter. Although a merciful, yet He is rightly *a jealous* God, and His "*glory will He not give to another.*"‡ He will not accept of a *divided* obedience, or of a *partial* confidence. You cannot serve God and Mammon, so neither can you trust God and man, the Creator and His creatures: God *will* not help you, if you trust Him not wholly; man *can* not save or deliver you, by himself, as the arm, trust you to him ever so much: means must be used, and God requires us to use them, but we must not abuse them, by placing thereon our dependence. Consider then this to be your duty and your strength; "*wait only upon God,*" declaring your unworthiness, but at the same time, never, oh! never lose sight of

* Continuation of Milner, vol. ii. p. 169.

† Rom. viii. 32. ‡ Isaiah xlviii. 11.

the all-prevalent intercession of your Redeemer: never, oh! never trust to anything short of this. With the confidence of David, say unto your soul, "*my expectation is from God, my God, my Father, in a covenant of peace with me through Jesus Christ.*" And say again, with David, "*Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee.*"* Surely you shall never be confounded.

* Psalm xxxix. 7.

VII.

LAMENTATIONS III. 57.

THOU DREWEST NEAR IN THE DAY THAT I CALLED UPON THEE; THOU SAIDST, FEAR NOT.

It is a mercy indeed, that we have a merciful God to deal with! and yet how few of the sons of men know this in reality: it is true, they will readily acknowledge this attribute of Jehovah, because they profess to depend on His mercy to pardon their short-comings: with them I can agree, in saying that the Lord God is "*merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*"* but I must also tell them that He is just, and therefore cannot overlook sin, nor pardon iniquity in any other than the appointed way, even by Christ Jesus. These are they, who acknowledge the value and importance of the Bible, and profess to admire the richness of its promises, but who in truth, practically reject the precepts which it teaches, and taste

* Exodus xxxiv. 6.

not the fullness of its consolations: these are they who 'have no perception of being wiser or better, or happier, when they lay it down—nay, they had not the least expectation of being so, when they took it up.'* To such, however, I trust, I do not now address myself; let us hasten therefore to consider the instructive and encouraging words before us.

In them we have the sweet experience of an eminent sufferer, whether we consider him as bewailing his own, or the Church's calamities; or rather as praising God for his own, or the Church's deliverance. His words do not regard *the future* but *the past;* they contain not a promise, but that which is, if we may so say, a fulfilment, or possession; we do not meditate on the prophet's *anticipation,* but his actual *enjoyment.* We will not however stay to examine into the case of him, by whose example and experience, I hope, we may profit, but proceed to apply his words to ourselves; for surely they are written for our instruction. It was the Lord God, to whom he addressed himself, it was the Lord God, who heareth prayer, "*mighty to save,*" who thus mercifully "*drew nigh in the day that He was called upon;*" it was the Lord God of heaven and earth, who said to His afflicted servant, "*Fear not.*" Now observe, dear reader, that "*the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot*

* The Scripture Reader's Guide, p. 3. An admirable little work by Caroline Fry.

*save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear."** He is still the same Lord, who once said "*Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am.*"† He is still, yes, and for ever, the same Lord, who bade His apostle write, "*Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you:*"‡ He is the same God who said of old, (and "*His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.*") "*Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God.*"§ He is the same unchanged and unchangeable I AM,‖ who, by the voice of His ministering angels addressed the astonished Zacharias, the wondering shepherds, and the affrighted Marys (and "*His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear,*") and bade them all, "*Fear not.*"¶ These then, are thy encouragements; you are in affliction, in doubts, in fears; you are oppressed, Oh! be not cast down; desponding, but yield not; discouraged, but despair not; tried, but yet hope thou, and hope in the Lord; call upon Him in earnest, persevering, inwrought prayer; in the day that you do so, trusting to the intercession of Jesus, the Mediator between God and sinful man, He will draw nigh to you: lay before Him your wants, make known to Him your desires, declare your unhesitating confidence in, and affiance upon Him;

* Isa. lix. 1. † Isa. lviii. 9.
‡ James iv. 8. § Isa. xli. 10. ‖ See Exod. iii. 14.
¶ See Luke i. 13; ii. 10. Matt. xxviii. 5.

and I again say, in the day that you do so, *He will surely draw nigh unto you.* Oh! be thankful for these encouragements; when He draws nigh, it shall be to bless you, to lift up the light of His countenance upon you, and give you peace;* when He draws nigh, He shall assuredly say unto you, as He has done to others, "*Fear not.*"

* Numbers vi. 26.

VIII.

PSALM XXXVII. 4.

DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART.

WITH much truth did the Apostle Paul proclaim, that "*godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*"* It is an assertion, verified by thousands, who have gone before, and confirmed likewise in the truth of it, by multitudes of believing Christians, now journeying onwards to the heavenly Canaan. David here tells us, that which Christ teaches us plainly and clearly, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*"† Seek, as your chief object, an interest in His heavenly kingdom of glory; seek first to attain the adoption of children, to call God your Father by adoption and grace, as well as by creation, and He will be your Father, in His works of mercy and of Providence, "*giving thee the desires*

* 1 Tim. iv. 8. † Matt. vi. 33.

of thine heart." Strive, in dependance on the promised aid of the Holy Spirit, that the ways of wisdom, (i. e. of religion, for that is true wisdom) may be *"ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace"** to you; then blessings are for ever yours, a gain, a peace, a rest, a consolation, an inheritance which the world cannot give, and as it gives not, so it cannot take away. Were I to say to the experienced Christian, who truly rejoices in the Lord, in the language which Elihu unfairly charged upon Job, *"It profiteth a man nothing, that he should delight himself with God,"*† he would surely exclaim, 'thanks be unto my God, I have inward, indwelling testimony to the contrary;' he would say, in the words of the prophet, *"although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:* YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD, I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION."‡ Yes, thou sorrowful, but I would hope, really rejoicing, sufferer, it is the language and experience of innumerable saints, once however, as thou art now, *"afflicted, tossed with tempest, (and for a time) not comforted,"* which I set before thee, when I exhibit to thy longing eyes the gracious promise, that *"the Lord will fulfil the desires of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will help them."*§

* Prov. iii. 17. † Job xxxiv. 9. ‡ Hab. iii. 17, 18.
§ Psalm cxlv. 19.

But it may not now be amiss to inquire what it is to "*delight ourselves in the Lord?*" for that is the main point here insisted on, the conditions, if I may so say, which we are to regard, or perhaps more correctly, the fruits of our faith, by Jesus Christ. We cannot then be said to delight ourselves in the Lord, unless we live in the constant exercise of these three graces, *prayer, faith, humility.*

By prayer, I would of course, be understood to mean the whole service which we owe to God, as public and private worship, reading daily, attentively and with self-application, His holy Word, as our hidden treasure as well as our shining light: in this we must take pleasure, not so much considering it as our bounden duty, as our glorious privilege; and esteem it to be, not a burden and a weariness, but a holy rest; and as it is intended to be, a perfect freedom. Then, Prayer, must be accompanied by Faith, for where there is no faith, there can be no answer; would you relieve a petitioning pauper, who, having asked an alms, should turn away from you, regardless and unexpectant of relief? So, in our approaches to the throne of grace, we must not act, as if we had delivered ourselves of our prayers, as a burden, or offered them as a duty, and then rise from our knees forgetful or unmindful of them! The promise of Christ runs thus: "*All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer,* BELIEVING, *ye shall receive.*"* But faith more-

* Matt. xxi. 22.

over carries along with it *confidence;* and this it is which conveys '*delight;*' this gives peace to the troubled spirit; this removes all fear; for when, with filial confidence *we* can say, "*I know whom I have believed,*"* tell me, is not this a happiness, which none experience, but the faithful and believing? And to this is added a pious and a holy *resignation* to the Divine will; for, being once persuaded of the love and faithfulness of God, we cannot but be confident, that although the dispensation of Providence may not seem "*for the present joyous, but grievous,*" we know that "*nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*"† Lastly, as a necessary consequence of Faith, *humility* must be added; by which we renounce all ideas of self, and maintain a spirit of dependance upon God, as the God of Creation and of Providence also. We use the means indeed, which He is pleased, in the furtherance of His designs of love, to put into our hands, but we depend not on them for safety and assistance. By the faithful exercise of this grace, we are enabled to say, 'All things are in Thine hand, O our Father, and at Thy disposal; we are, and we wish to be, the clay, Thou art, and we rejoice that Thou art, the Potter; all our ways we commit unto Thee, gladly, cheerfully, unfeignedly; submitting ourselves and all our concerns to Thy guidance and direction, as Thou alone art able,

* 2 Tim. i. 12. † Hebrews xii. 11.

without Thee we are unable: Thine is the strength, and Thine shall be the glory.'

This it is to *"delight ourselves in the Lord,"* and to joy in the God of our salvation. Oh! then, this aim at, this long for, this endeavour, by the grace of our God, to do, and doubt not the result: rejoice in seeking Him in these appointed means, and the end of your search shall be triumph; delight in the Lord, and He, for Christ's sake, will delight in shewing you mercy, in bestowing peace, in *"giving thee the desire of thine heart."* *

* If it be needful to qualify this expression, after that which I have stated above, (See note §, Meditation v.) I will adopt the words of one, to whom, under God, the Church is much indebted; 'God,' he says, 'has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body, and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the *renewed, sanctified* soul. What *is the desire* of the heart of a good man? It is this, *to know, and love, and live to God, to please Him, and be pleased in Him.*'—Matthew Henry.

IX.

ISAIAH XXXI. 1, 3.

WOE TO THEM THAT GO DOWN TO EGYPT FOR HELP; AND STAY ON HORSES, AND TRUST IN CHARIOTS, BECAUSE THEY ARE MANY; AND IN HORSEMEN, BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY STRONG; BUT THEY LOOK NOT UNTO THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL, NEITHER SEEK THE LORD. . . . NOW THE EGYPTIANS ARE MEN, AND NOT GOD, AND THEIR HORSES FLESH, AND NOT SPIRIT. WHEN THE LORD SHALL STRETCH OUT HIS HAND, BOTH HE THAT HELPETH SHALL FALL, AND HE THAT IS HOLPEN SHALL FALL DOWN, AND THEY ALL SHALL FAIL TOGETHER.

THE greater part of the Bible, especially the historical portions of it, would be as useless to us, or nearly so at least, as the tales which amused us in our earlier years, unless we applied the different narratives, which we there meet with, to ourselves, and engaged ourselves, as it were, with a *personal concern*, in every part of it. The things there recorded of man, and especially too, I think, God's dealings with the people of Israel, His chosen, "*are written for our admonition.*"* It was not with a view to render their names immortal, that the faith of Abraham, the fortunes of Joseph, the varied and

* 1 Corinthians x. 11.

chequered life of David, or the piety of Hezekiah, are preserved unto us, but alike for the glory of God, and our instruction, whether it be in the way of comfort, warning, or encouragement. 'In their sufferings, we see our dangers; in their sins, we see our corruptions; in their conduct our duties; and in their triumph, our exalted hopes.'*

Having premised thus much, supplicating the Spirit's teaching, let us approach the history alluded to in the words before us.

In them, the prophet shews to the people of Israel the folly and danger of trusting to Egypt, and of forsaking God. Have *we* no Egypt on which we trust? In our troubles and difficulties, in our afflictions, trials, and bereavements, we naturally look around for help, and for means by which we may be relieved from, or supported under, them: in this we are apt to imitate the folly of the Jews, to run into the same danger, and infallibly, therefore, we shall fall into the same condemnation. Now what was their folly? They would "*go down to Egypt for help against the Assyrians, stay on horses and trust in chariots and in horsemen, and they would not look unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord.*" Do not *we* put too much confidence in the means which we use, and rely too intimately on the assistance of man, and look not sufficiently to the wisdom and providence of God, or rely on Him only in a secondary manner? Do we not indeed, far too

* Scripture Reader's Guide, p. 70.

often, *"take counsel, but not of God,"** and refrain from seeking counsel by prayer, until we have determined how we shall act? The prophet proclaims *"woe"* against those who stayed on horses and chariots, in their exigence, because they were *"many and strong;"* do not *we* stay on our plans, because they are many, and on our friends, because we fancy them very strong? and we look not to, or looking, we trust not, the Holy One of Israel, neither seek we, or seeking, we seek not faithfully, the Lord of Hosts, for guidance and direction, for His favour and blessing. Is not this folly? But consider also *the danger;* the prophet reasons thus, *"Now the Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit."* Thus, man is but man, our friends are but men, our schemes are but the devices of man; *"they are flesh and not spirit."* See now and consider, *"what confidence is this wherein thou trustest? I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom doth thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Lo, thou trusteth in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it."*† Oh! shall man, vain man, think to do great things for himself, when, of himself, he can do nothing? Can man extricate himself from those difficulties, which the Lord, his Maker, brings upon him? or, of himself, bear up against those trials which the Lord, his God

* Isaiah xxx. 1. † Isaiah xxxvi. 4, 6.

may send upon him? Beware lest you be found fighting against God. Remember, that He is able to make the weak, strong, and *"the strong, as tow;"** remember, that in *His* strength, *"one can chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight;*† but that without Him, *"one thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one, and ten thousand fall before two."* Oh! then, what is man, that we should trust in him, or our plans, that we should hope in them? How striking is the prophet's reasoning, how self-evident the conclusion! The Egyptians are *men,* their horses, *flesh; they are not God, they are not spirit;* they are the creatures of His creation, the work of His hands! we need no further proof of their vanity.

Herein then is the folly and danger of which we spoke; it remains, that we consider the consequences: the prophet says, *"When the Lord shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together."* This is the inevitable consequence of trusting to an arm of flesh, when we profess likewise to call upon the Lord. See how wisely Ezra reasoned; he bid the people keep a fast and seek of God *'a right way,'* before they set out on their return from Babylon to Jerusalem:— *"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little*

* Isaiah i. 31. † Deut. xxxii. 30.

*ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king, a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him: but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him."** Nor must we forget to observe, how God fulfilled His promise to them, and gave them deliverance without any other aid; for we read, *"Then we departed from the river of Ahava, on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way."*† Now we will see the inevitable result of trusting to an arm of flesh; innumerable instances are at hand; take one, which is stated in the plainest terms, *"At that time Hanani the seer, came to Asa king of Juda, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because thou didst rely on the Lord thy God, He delivered them into thine hand. Herein thou hast done foolishly; therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."*‡ Nor need we look for more recent cases; despair and defeat, disappointment and confusion shall come upon all, eventually, if not at the

* Ezra viii. 21, 22. † Ezra viii. 31. ‡ 2 Chron. xvi. 7, 9.

first, who in their plans and purposes, seek counsel of man only, trust to his arm for success, and knowingly and obstinately forsake the Lord God of Heaven and earth, or either partially, fearfully, and not confidently, seek for His blessing." *Thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live; but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live."** Oh! Reader, hide God's word in your heart, that you may not sin against Him: through His precepts get understanding, therefore shall you hate every false way.†

But there are now *directions to be given,* and *comfort* is to be administered, arising from this history. Our directions have been partly anticipated; for what person is there, who, when the foolish and the wise, the dangerous and the safe way have been displayed before him, will hesitate which to pursue? But more than this remains; it is not sufficient for us to *choose* this better way; we must *follow on* in it, with sincerity, steadfastness, and devotedness, cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart: this must be done by constant and earnest prayer; by constant, I do not mean set, formal periods of time, so much as an habitual, persevering seeking of God; not the outward bending of the knee, but the inward uplifting of the heart; not the language of

* Amos v. 4—6. † Psalm cxix. 11, 104,

the lips, but the pious ejaculations, the fervent expressions of a faithful and devoted, a confiding and a cheerful spirit. We have also another important direction which God's own word shall explain. *"The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still." "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel—in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."** Wait patiently the issue of those means which the Lord shall use, as the instruments, not the authors, of His intended blessing to you; having *"turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God;"*† *wait upon Him* in faith and patience.

Lastly, receive the *comfort and encouragement* which the words of the Prophet exhibit; they breathe "sweetness out of woe." Consider this, *'woe'* is denounced upon those who trust in human aid, and forsake the Lord, and His help; upon them *"when the Lord shall stretch out His hand,"* it shall be to confound them! *blessing* therefore is promised to those who trust *not* on human aid, but who seek *the Lord,* and stay upon their God; and *"when He shall stretch out His hand"* on these, even that mighty hand and outstretched arm wherewith He getteth victory, it shall be to exalt, not confound, to bless, not destroy them. These shall fully understand the difference of the event to Asa, when he trusted, at one time, in the arm of the Lord, but

* Isaiah xxx. 7, 15. † 1 Thess. i. 9.

at another, relied on the aid of the king of Syria; and these, on looking back to the days of their trial, on reviewing with complacency the hours of their sadness, when remembering their doubts, their cares and their anxieties, will, with Samuel of old, in triumph raise up their Ebenezer, saying, *"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."** They also will determine and decide with David, *"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God;"* by whose aid they shall also say with David, *"They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright."*† This is the expected end to them, for *"this cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."*‡

* 1 Sam. vii. 12. † Psalm xx. 7, 8.

‡ Isaiah xxviii. 29.

X.

EPHESIANS V. 20.

GIVING THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS UNTO GOD AND THE FATHER, IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

As there are but two distinct classes of persons to be found among those who are called by the name of Christ, *the regenerate and the unregenerate,* so we may divide into two classes, the states of mankind in general, *prosperity and adversity, happiness and misery, crowns and crosses.* For either of these states, in which we may be placed, or as they may come upon us, we are directed to '*give thanks always.*' 'How!' (says the unregenerate, and therefore *rebellious* spirit,) 'shall we bless God, for afflictions, for losses, for disappointments?' 'Yes,' (says the regenerate, and therefore *obedient* spirit) '*shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*'* But we may go still further than this, and affirm, that in sending afflictions upon us,

* Job ii. 10.

God has a design of *mercy* towards us, and purposes them to be, however we may receive them, *blessings in disguise;* and hence it is, that we are bound to "*give thanks always for all things.*"*

Let us take Scripture instances. Job, when in prosperity, in affluence and happiness, "*was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil:*" when his children perished, when his cattle, his flocks, and his herds were taken away or destroyed, being left childless and in penury, he humbled himself before God, and worshipped, saying, "*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*"† Again, when he was not only deprived of his children, his substance

* We have an encouraging word of exhortation in the following extract from a letter written to the community of Port Royal by their Pastor, M. de St. Marthe, during their captivity, and his own exile from his flock. "Let us believe that the happiest spot for the Christian, is not always that which to sense appears brightest; but rather that in which he is most frequently compelled to cast himself upon the strength of God only; and where outward circumstances, by affording him the most frequent exercises of humility, charity, and patience, yield him most facilities for practising the tempers, and receiving the impress of the likeness of his divine Master. When, therefore, you are beset by trials, seek not to escape from the hand of Him who has attached you to the Cross; but rather say to Him with the humble, but fervent love of Israel of old, to the Angel who wrestled with him, "*I will not let thee go except thou bless me.*" The way of tribulation is the way of the kingdom; walk you in it. If the ground of your hearts be harrowed by the good husbandman, expect in patience the abundant harvest."—*Memoirs of Port Royal, vol.* 1, *page* 351.

† Job i. 21.

and the comforts of life, but suffering also grievously in body, so grievously as perhaps almost to deprive him of life,* he again humbled himself; and when moved by one, who *should* have been a comfort to him, to *"curse God and die!"* he exclaimed, in the words above cited, *"What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"* And it is testified of him by the Spirit of God, that *"in all this did not Job sin with his lips."*† To describe the gratitude of David for his afflictions (strange as this may sound in the ears of many) would be to do little less than transcribe many of his most interesting Psalms. Well indeed might he give thanks unto God for them, since we have his own testimony of the benefit which he derived from them, *"Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word:"*‡ we have his determination to *'give thanks always for all things,'* when he says, *"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be continually in my mouth."*§ And again in persecution, and when apparently forsaken of God for a season, we find it his fixed purpose, still to hold fast his confidence, saying unto his God, *"I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more."*‖

* Job ii. 6. † Job ii. 10. ‡ Psalm cxix. 67.

§ Psalm xxxiv. 1.

‖ Psalm lxxi. 14. "A great part of the little we know of our God," observes Newton, in one of his letters, "His faithfulness, His compassion, His readiness to hear and to answer our prayers, His wisdom in delivering and providing

We want not then examples, we want not illustrations of the Apostle's meaning, when he exhorts us to "*give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" What therefore *do* we need? We want *faith*, whereby to put in practice that which we approve in others; does it seem hard for flesh and blood to do so? St. Paul tells us how we must compass our difficulty; it is "*in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*" as he says in another place, "*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*"* And again, "*By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.*"† Yes, this is the way to the mercy-seat, whether with prayer or praise, for it is the only way in which God will accept or admit us. It is the grace, the constraining grace of Christ, which alone can enable us to approach *with thanksgiving*, when suffering affliction. But the people of the Lord enjoy this as their privilege; and it is their privilege to know, how afflictions are blessings. Thousands now on earth are ready to add their grateful testimony to that of the tens of thousands now before the throne, singing the praises of redeeming love, and ascribing the glories which they now enjoy, to the afflictions,

when our contrivances fail, and His goodness in overruling every thing to our soul's good,—I say, much of what we know of these things, we learnt in our trials, and have therefore reason to say, It was good for us to be afflicted."

* Col. iii. 17. † Heb. xiii. 15.

which, as the means in the hand of God, they endured when on earth; they date their first hours of happiness, and their consequent years of increasing holiness and happiness, from that day when the chastening hand of the Lord came upon them: *they gave thanks,* as well indeed they might also, with David, *for all things;* they found it to their eternal interest to *"be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and (they now) live: for He chastened them for their profit, that they might be partakers of His holiness."** And now let me ask you, dear reader, who are now suffering and being tried in the furnace of affliction, will you give *thanks* to God for this chastisement? Will you receive it as a test of your adoption?† Or will you grieve and repine, murmur and despair, counting, in the stubbornness and obduracy of your heart, your trial not joyous, but grievous? *Will* you, or *do* you receive it as a punishment or a blessing? as the infliction of a hard Master, or the gift of a tender Parent? as an obstinate rebel, or a dutiful child? In one or other of these views, in one or other of these characters, you *must* receive it. Oh! let it not be said against you, 'I sent you a blessing in disguise and you thoughtlessly rejected it: you were living in heedlessness and unconcern, I sent a warning voice which you foolishly disregarded; I fain would have taught you, but you would not be taught.' Oh! may it never appear against you, that thus God *"called,*

* Heb. xii. 9, 10. † Heb. xii. 6.

but you refused,—thus stretched out His hand, but you did not regard it:" nor may you ever be compelled to hear this distressing judgment against you, *"I spake unto thee in thy prosperity: but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyest not my voice."** Oh! no. May you rather have faith, love, and patience to exclaim, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth; Do unto me that which seemeth Thee good." Thus, and thus only, will you in every thing give thanks: and as Gideon *"taught the men of Succoth with thorns of the wilderness and briars,"*† so shall you, being taught by the briars and thorns of affliction, improved by every trial, receive each fresh one as a fresh mercy, and exclaim, "By this would my Father *instruct and teach me;* what good lesson shall I learn from it, and how shall I improve it?"

* Jeremiah xxii. 21. † Judges viii. 16.

XI.

JOHN XIV. 27.

PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU, NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU.

Oh! what a precious legacy is this! The Saviour of man, the God of Heaven and earth says, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you.*" It is indeed worth inquiry—I. *What* this peace is. II. *To whom* it is given. III. *How* it is to be obtained. First, then, we ask, what is this peace? Is it freedom from affliction, or exemption from trials? No; because they are frequently the instruments, by which it is conveyed. Does it consist in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, or the possession of boundless wealth? No; because the former will not bring a man peace at the last; and the latter begets cares and anxieties, of which the poor man knows nothing.* Is he in possession of this peace, who is, and who indeed *may* be, at peace

* See Eccles. ii. 1—11.

G.

with all mankind, whose temper is seldom or never ruffled, whose anger is never excited, whose passions are never roused? No; for such *may* have been those heathen philosophers, who not only lived before this particular bequest was bestowed, but who knew not Him who gave it, nor that Spirit, by whom it is imparted. This peace, then, differs from those which I have mentioned: it differs *materially*, it differs *fundamentally*, it differs *entirely;* it differs, as light differs from darkness, as truth from falsehood; for the peace of Christ is a peace which the world cannot give; it is a peace unintelligible to all, except the children of God, by adoption and grace, whose heart and whose affections are set *"on things above, and not on things on the earth;** who know, that being *"strangers and pilgrims on the earth,"*† *"we have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come."*‡ Oh! yes; as *"there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death,"*§ so there is a peace which the world holds out, but it is a false peace, a delusion of Satan, the prince of this world, the enemy of our souls.

But to speak more expressly concerning this peace, the true peace; it is intended for us in things *temporal and spiritual:* like the godliness of which it is the fruit, it has the *"promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."* ‖ I shall not speak at length on the peculiar properties of

* Col. iii. 2. † Heb. xi. 13. ‡ Heb. xiii. 14.
§ Prov. xiv. 12. ‖ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

this peace in these two matters; and it is the less important that I should do so, because in describing the characters to whom it is given, we must speak of their several necessities, and thus the peculiar and distinguishing virtues of this heavenly gift will be made to appear. Let it therefore suffice us to be assured, that in adversity, or in the hours of doubt and anxiety, a perfect cessation from disquietude, a filial, unfeigned confidence in the mercy and providence of God, is provided for the distressed and disordered spirit, by this peace; there is a balm for every wound, an assurance for every doubt, a hope for every fear. And also, in the hours of our *spiritual* trials, in the seasons of *spiritual* despondency, this peace is a peace nigh at hand, the offspring of those "*exceeding great and precious promises*,"* which shew unto the sinner the Saviour; unto the sin-sick soul the Heavenly Physician; to the weary and way-worn traveller, the desired rest: exhibiting the Cross of Christ, as his surety for the possession of the promised crown; setting before his eyes the scene of Mount Calvary, as a cheering prospect in his sufferings, while sojourning in this vale of tears. These surely, to the chief of sinners are "*worthy of all acceptation*," for in them there is an antidote against despair; balm of Gilead to the most desponding, manna for the hungry, oil and wine for the fainting. What need I say more? this is indeed peace! but *to whom* is it given? This is our second inquiry.

* 2 Peter i. 4.

As we have spoken of the peace which the afflicted sufferer in *temporal* things, and the desponding in *spiritual* things, may hope for, we must continue the distinction in describing the characters to whom it is given: and first, of the sufferer in *temporal* things. I know not, fellow-traveller, what your affliction is; it may be, that you are mourning the loss of friends or property; it may be, that you are labouring under misrepresentation or reproach, living in doubt as to your future prospects, or in anxiety respecting the issue of some promising scheme of happiness; whatever it be, you are not at ease: remember then, that the promise of *peace* is held out to all, who, so far from being *"careful and troubled about many things,"* cast their cares and their burden on the Lord, rely on Him with confidence and complacency, because of His rich, free, and gracious assurances, His merciful and encouraging invitations; to all, who, so far from trusting to an arm of flesh for assistance or deliverance, trust simply and solely upon Him, whose *"works are wonderful, and His counsels of old, faithfulness and truth."** Where is there a peace like unto this? they who are rich in this faith, are rich indeed; their peace shall flow like a river; they can say, with peculiar appropriation, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."*† Oh! what shall hinder you from rejoicing in the possession of your Redeemer's legacy? Are you one of His disciples? It was left unto them: like His

* Isaiah xxv. 1. † Psalm xxiii. 1.

apostle Peter, *"silver and gold"* He had none, but He left that which is infinitely better, His peace: look then for it and abide, waiting; *your* troubles shall subside as the morning dew: or else the Lord, by His favour shall make *your* mountain to stand strong ;* so that your testimony shall be this, *"I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy: for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities."*† Oh! then, *"let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*‡ But for you who are mourning over the sorrows and afflictions *of your soul,* I have comfort and the promise of this peace in rich profusion. It is for those, who, renouncing as unscriptural, therefore as dangerous and unsound, all idea of self, as being unable, by sin, original and actual, to justify, or aid in justifying, themselves in the sight of God, cling faithfully and simply to the once-perfected sacrifice of Christ Jesus, as all-sufficient, all-perfect, and entirely acceptable to God: it is for those, who mourn over their sins in godly sorrow, and manifest their deep and genuine repentance of them, by a life devoted to their Saviour's service, at the same time feeling how unprofitable are their best performances, how unacceptable, yea, how displeasing to God, unless offered up by, and through, Christ Jesus: § this peace is the peculiar heritage of the Christian, rightly so called; not of those, who with their lips *confess,* but by their lives

* See Psalm xxx. 7. † Psalm xxxi. 7 ‡ John xiv. 27.
§ See Articles XII and XIII of the Church of England.

deny, Christ to be their Lord; not of those, who merely believe in Him, as the promised Redeemer of mankind—who know nothing of Him, but the name —who have not *"received the Holy Ghost since they believed."* Oh! No: where there is a sense of the need, the absolute need of a Saviour, a feeling, an abiding and influential feeling of our own nothingness and insufficency, a faith, an implicit faith in the atonement of Christ, a conviction, a decided conviction that He *"is made unto us, of God, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,"** there, there is peace, for these are the words, *"My peace I give unto you;"* "the peace (as our Saviour might say) which, as I obtained it by purchase, it is mine to bestow; as it was *sin* which brought me down from Heaven, to self-convicted, self-condemned *sinners,* I gladly bestow it." *Now what have you to say, why you enjoy not this peace?* I suppose you know and feel, that you have *nothing but sin* within you, it is this which makes you mourn: here is *one hindrance* removed; you see salvation *in none but Christ;* here is *another hindrance gone;* what then remains, but the entrance in of peace, of perfect peace? these two things, want of self-knowledge and a want of the knowledge of the Gospel, keep the mind from peace, for it cannot be stayed on Christ; but when they are removed, the soul *must* receive Christ as its all, *must* rest in Him, *must* be in perfect peace therefore; for I trust we have not read

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

these words in vain, "*Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.*" If there be any other hindrance, it is with yourself. Remove it then, with "*the sword of the spirit which is the word of God,*" well tried and proved; take also "*the shield of faith,*"—"*be instant,*" be urgent, "*continue in prayer.*"* and Christ will give you an entrance into the purchased possession.

It is time that we now come to the anxious inquiry, *How* is this peace to be obtained? I need not here separate between the two cases, because by the same means and in the same way, peace must be pursued by all; these methods are the appointed means of grace, Prayer, the Word of God, and His ordinances; these are the channels of communication between God and man, by which God makes known His will and His promises to man; and by which man makes known his wants unto Him, who alone can relieve them. Prayer, we know, must be made in dependance upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Jesus Christ; as it is written, "*through Him we both* (Jew and Gentile) *have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*"† No one, who has asked in faith, for a fish, received a serpent, or a stone for bread;‡ no one who seeks for the consolation, direction and peace of the Bible, in simplicity, earnestness, and sincerity, shall return empty away, or find himself destitute, comfortless, forsaken. Oh!

* Ephes. vi. 16, 17. Romans xii. 12. Col. iv. 2.
† Ephes. ii. 18. ‡ See Matthew vii. 7—11.

only believe; be not discouraged; look not at your difficulties, but at God's promises; regard not your inefficiency, but Christ's all-sufficiency; and in God's appointed time, you will be sure to exclaim, 'Peace, O my Saviour, Thou hast left, *and left it me;* Thy peace Thou hast given, *and given it me.*'

Lastly, observe what our Lord said of this peace; "*Not as the world giveth, give I unto you;*" no, truly; not as the world, either in *matter*, or in *manner:* not in matter, for the world has no peace to give; or if it have, it perishes with the body; the peace which it offers, is as frail as the body, both shall die together; the peace which Christ gives to the soul, is as lasting as the soul, both shall live eternally. Nor in *manner* do the peace of the world, and the peace of Christ, agree: that is, not in the manner of bestowing it; the world gives its peace *conditionally*, the loss of heaven must be the consequence; Christ gives His peace *freely*, the enjoyment of heaven, and a foretaste of it, is the consequence: the world gives sparingly, and with much alloy; Christ gives richly, and with His peace there is no pain, with His love no fear.* Here too is the pledge of the stability of your Saviour's legacy, the bequest of Him who is the "Prince of peace;" He said to His disciples, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*"† Peace then is the

* 1 John iv. 18. † John xvi. 33.

fruit of His victory; and when once given, it is lasting as the hills, yea, *more durable* than the mountains. For "*the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.*"*

* Isaiah liv. 10.

XII.

NEHEMIAH II. 20.

THEN ANSWERED I THEM, AND SAID UNTO THEM, THE GOD OF HEAVEN, HE WILL PROSPER US.

THAT is no small aggravation of our trials, which friends will sometimes occasion us, by their discouragements and evil forebodings: when our hearts are full of hope, and we are, by God's grace, building on His faithfulness, confident and calmly waiting the fulfilment of His promises, it is a sore trial to hear from their lips, words which tend to damp those hopes and renew our fears. Discouragements and disappointments we *may* expect from outward circumstances, over which we can have no control, but to find these increased by those who bear the hallowed name of *friend*, is indeed an addition of fuel to the flames; not however, on the other hand, that I would wish them to be too sanguine in their encouragements, nor cause in us an excitement disproportionate to our reasonable expectations; this were going to the other extreme: but surely there is

a happy medium, a coinciding with our hopes, rather than a cruel attempt to blast them, a participation of our faith rather than the desire to dissipate at once, the trust which we have been enabled to place in the mercy, guidance, and superintending care of our Heavenly Father.

The case of Nehemiah, whose words I have quoted above, is not perhaps strictly analogous to the views which I have here expressed; it is not, however, the less worthy of our notice, because his determined reply *is* decidedly analogous. Let us briefly consider the circumstance which gave rise to Nehemiah's expression of faith and confidence. He had received a command from God; and as a means to execute it, he had obtained from King Artaxerxes, assistance to rebuild the temple and the wall of Jerusalem: while he and his companions were thus busied, certain men laughed them to scorn, and despised their labours; Nehemiah, strengthened and animated, because of "*the hand of his God which was good upon him,*" answered them and said, "*The God of heaven, He will prosper us.*" Nor was this all; the former opposition still attended him while preparing for his work; he met with still further scoffing, whilst, in continued dependance on the Lord's aid, he maintained his faith, and prosecuted his labours: the same enemies publicly mocked and poured contempt upon their work, saying, "*What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish*

*which are burned!"** 'Feeble Jews' they would have been, had they regarded these tauntings, when they had the Lord, strong and mighty, with them! Oh! mark well the consequent proceedings of this man of God; he rendered not railing for railing; he prayed, but did not cease; he prayed and *continued in the work;* mark also well the consequences; *"so we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work."*† Increased opposition did he still encounter from his enemies,‡ and discouragement also from his own party,§ but all were ineffectual to damp his courage or weaken his confidence; he made his prayer unto God, as a first step, before he used any means; and having prayed, he set and appointed a watch against his foes;‖ he encouraged and animated his companions, exhorting them not to be afraid, but to *"remember the Lord, which is great and terrible;"*¶ his stay, his consolation was, *"our God shall fight for us."*** In convincing language his conduct, courage, and piety exclaim,

> 'Yet neither thus dishearten'd nor dismay'd,
> The time prepar'd I waited.'††

The case of the patient man of Uz is perhaps more nearly allied to our present subject. He had indeed reason to complain of his unmerciful friends: surely none of us can expect to hear from the lips of any,

* Nehemiah iv. 2. † Ibid. iv. 6. ‡ Ibid. iv. 7, 8, 11.
§ Ibid. iv. 10. ‖ Ibid. iv. 9. ¶ Ibid. iv. 14.
** Ibid. iv. 20. †† Milton.

save of our most bitter enemies, such language and such rebukes as fell from the lips of his unkind counsellors. Well might he exclaim to them, in the anguish of his soul, "*Miserable comforters are ye all;*"* and well might he charge them, saying, "*Ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value; oh! that ye would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom.*"† Now mark well the consequent proceeding of *this* man of God; in the one case he asserts, "*my witness is in Heaven, and my record is on high; my friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears unto God:*"‡ in the other, how great is his confidence, when he exclaims concerning God, "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: behold now, I have ordered my cause, I know that I shall be justified.*"§ Mark well also, in this case, the consequence! The God of Job finally made these his friends submit themselves unto him, and He reproved them for their "*folly,*" while He blessed Job by restoring to him double his former wealth and prosperity.‖

Now these things were written, and are recorded, for our example and encouragement: let me then briefly recommend to you the faith, confidence, and perseverance of these men of God: I pray you therefore, "*in the name of our God set up your banners;*"¶ hold fast your hope and your trust; display the

* Job xvi. 2. † Ibid xiii. 4, 5.
‡ Ibid. xvi. 19, 20. § Ibid. xiii. 15, 18.
‖ See Ibid. xlii. 7—12: and compare verse 12 with chap. i. 3.
¶ Psalm xx. 5.

Word of the Lord, as the ground of your confidence, His faithfulness, through Jesus Christ, as the surety for the fulfilment of His promises: believe me, "*it is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea also from this withdraw not thine hand; for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.*"* Make Him your refuge, when these storms assail you; make Him your shield and hiding-place,† when these unkind taunts disturb you; make Him your friend *before* the time of trial comes, that when earthly friends shall fail and forsake you, *He* may be your portion, who never fails, who never, no, never forsakes those who make Him their stay and support: say, as David to his friends,—who, in the time of persecution, advised him to fly to some place of refuge, and seek safety in the devices of worldly wisdom,—say with him, "*In the Lord put I my trust, how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?*"‡ Be not inconsistent; but make the Lord your mountain: let Him be your "*strength, your rock, your fortress, and your deliverer; your buckler, and the horn of your salvation, and your high tower;*"§ oh! hither resort, and hence, high-exalted, as it were, look down with holy joy; and in the enjoyment of perfect peace, ease, and security, look to the everlasting "*hills, whence cometh your help;*"‖ and when friends dispirit you, in the fulness of your assurance, answer them and say, "*The God of Heaven, He will prosper me.*"

* Eccles. vii. 18. † Psalm cxix. 114. ‡ Ibid. xi. 1.
§ Ibid. xviii. 2. ‖ Ibid. cxxi. 1.

XIII.

ROMANS XII. 12.

REJOICING IN HOPE, PATIENT IN TRIBULATION CONTINUING INSTANT IN PRAYER.

LET us take these Apostolical directions for our consideration, in the order in which they occur. We are exhorted, first, to *"rejoice in hope;"* surely this needs no cogent arguments to recommend it to us for our adoption; we are generally sanguine enough in our hopes and expectations; the main point is, that we be careful to place them on the right foundation, the power, mercy, and faithfulness of God, in and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Observe then, that we are bidden to *rejoice* in hope, and not to be *cast down,* for it is the property of this grace to encourage, not to depress, to animate, not dispirit, to create joy, not despair; we have reason to expect, that *"the God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost:"** and *this* is the point to be sought for, when we would rejoice

* Rom. xv. 13.

in our hopes, *the power, the aid of the Holy Ghost the Comforter,* for this only and alone can sustain them, and keep our souls from fainting, since it is the power and influence of the Holy Ghost, which alone can apply the promises of God's Word, and comfort our souls in the multitude of our thoughts within us; it is by the power of the Holy Ghost that we continue to hope for that which we see not, and which causes us to rejoice with a joy unspeakable, a joy unearthly, raising up and sustaining in us, *hopes* amid discouragements, *hopes* amid delay, and *hope* unto the end. Say then, with an arm so Almighty, with a right hand so strong, with a friend so full of mercy and loving-kindness, is it a hard thing we bid you do, when we exhort you to *rejoice* in your hopes, and when your *"heart and your flesh fail,"* to wait with a believing, therefore with a peaceful, with a confiding, therefore with a contented spirit, the dispensations and disposals of the Lord, and in the fulness of hope to say *"God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever?"** Consider Him who has said, *"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,"*† and surely you will *"thank God and take courage."*

There appears so manifest a connection between the two directions—*"rejoice in hope,"* and *"be*

* Psalm lxxiii. 26. † Isaiah xliii. 2.

patient in tribulation," (*"knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope;"**)—that I might almost unite them under one head. When we are in tribulation, we have need of hope; and if we rejoice, we shall be patient, if we be patient, we shall rejoice:† so that I might perhaps say no more upon it, except that an opportunity offers itself of saying a few words to exhort you to *faith*, which must be the root and groundwork of your patient rejoicing; for if you have no faith, the promises will be null and void to you; and if you be without promise, then are you certain to be tossed to and fro, carried about by your fears and forebodings, having no hold to cling to, no rest to look forward to. Consider then how it is, *"that the trying of your faith worketh patience:"*‡ this faith must be earnest, yet simple, fervent, yet humble, unfeigned, unshaken, expecting; it must be any thing but doubting, any thing but wavering, any thing but weak; plead the promises, and expect the fulfilment: *"bring forth your strong reasons,"*§ and anticipate a gracious communion and a merciful result. I know not how you can be otherwise than *"patient in tribulation,"* and consequently *"rejoicing in hope,"* if your faith be thus directed.‖

* Rom v. 3, 4. † See Col. i. 11. ‡ James i. 3. § Isaiah xli. 21.

‖ I shall be excused introducing the following extract from a work which I would were in the hands of every *Minister:* it is from the pen of the author of another work, which I would

But we come now to the mean and the instrument, the source and the engine, if I may so say, of these blessings; "*continue instant in prayer*;" Do we look for fruit without the blossom, a harvest-time without seed-time? Look we for light without the sun, or rain without clouds? When we do, we may as reasonably expect to rejoice in our hopes, or be patient in our tribulations, without continuing instant in prayer. I take it for granted, my Christian sufferer, that in this, your hour of sadness, you pour out your complaints before God in prayer; but do you cry *mightily?* do you plead *earnestly*, "*offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears?*"* do you pray without ceasing? Do not think, that in reproving the vain repetitions of the Pharisees, Christ forbid or discouraged importunity, and a continuance in prayer for the same object, though the answer be delayed for a season. He Himself, on the contrary, bids us be importunate;

were in the closet of every *Christian*, (Exposition of Psalm CXIX.) The Extract is this,—"As all the promises are made to *faith*, or to the grace springing from it—this is the only spring of Christian courage, and Christian hope. *Unbelief looks at the difficulty: faith regards the promise;* unbelief therefore makes our work a service of bondage; faith realizes it as a "labour of love:" unbelief drags on in sullen despondency: faith makes the patience, with which it is content to wait for success, "the patience of hope." (I Thess. i. 3.) As there is no difficulty, that is not the fruit of unbelief; there is none that will not ultimately be overcome by the perseverance of faith."—Bridges on the Christian Ministry, part iii. chap. 10.

* Heb. v. 7.

He Himself sets us an example, of which, the Garden of Gethsemane was a memorable witness.* And, in addition to his abounding exhortations to continual, persevering prayer, St. Paul fails not to confirm his precepts by his practice; for he tells us, that on a certain occasion he besought the Lord *thrice*.† Oh! then faint not, desist not; ask, *until* it be given; seek, *until* you find; knock, *until* it be opened unto you; for he that asketh in faith, in due time, receiveth; he that seeketh earnestly, in due time, findeth; and he that knocketh with lawful importunity, in due time shall gain admission. Be assured, (for on the authority of God's Word, I speak, and which bids me speak thus boldly) be confidently assured, that if you "*continue instant in prayer,*" you shall, by the influence of the same Holy Spirit, be enabled to "*be patient in tribulation, and rejoice in your hope.*"

* Matthew xxvi. 36—44. † II Cor. xii. 8.

XIV.

PROVERBS XXIV. 10.

IF THOU FAINT IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY, THY STRENGTH IS SMALL.

THIS is the testimony of that Heavenly Comforter, by whose inspiration these words were put into the mouth of the royal author; of that gracious Comforter, by whom strength is supplied to those who do *not* faint in the day of adversity; it is therefore a true testimony; and as the verse contains *an express declaration*, and *a direct accusation*, it may, by the blessing of God, be profitable for us to meditate upon it.

We have before us a test of our faith, a trial of our confidence in God, and as such, the words are important. Let us then consider these two things: First, we ought *not* to faint in the day of adversity. Secondly, if we do, *what are the causes of our fainting.*

I. We ought *not* to faint in the day of adversity! Why? Because the Lord has so placed every man in this vale of tears, that trials and sorrows are

common to all; from "*the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction*" none are exempt; not one, since "*man* (i. e. the whole race of man) *is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward,*"* and therefore all ought to be prepared to expect it: but with this curse entailed upon us by Adam, the blessing of the gift of faith, and the promise of strength under the infliction of this curse, are proclaimed in and by the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ; so that, although we deserve nothing at the hands of God, but endless misery, yet we are not left to be "the sport of fortune," (as is the language of the worldly and profane) or at the mercy of our arch enemy; if wounded, the same hand that sent the affliction, will send also deliverance; if persecuted, the same power which allows us to be persecuted, is ready to be stretched out in our defence; if in danger of sinking, the same eye which sends and sees the coming storm, is ever watching to afford us aid, the same attentive ear is ever open to our cry; the "*Lord save or I perish*" of drowning Peter, is also the Christian's panoply: Yes, He that wounds, is alone able to heal: "*behold*" (says Job) "*He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.*"† But moreover, there is another reason why we ought not to faint in the day of adversity; not only because we have One to apply to, who is greater than all who can be arrayed against us, but because there is, what is not

* Job v. 7. † Ibid. xii. 14.

unaptly called, "*a need be*" for every affliction, i. e. "*that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*"* And in unison with this, is the prophet's call to the people of the Lord to glorify Him in their tribulation, "*Wherefore, glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea.*"† Now this is evidently our duty, because it is not for His own pleasure, or because He delights in our sorrows, that the Lord visits us with them; truly no—the testimony of David, one of the most experienced in the school of adversity, is this, "*I know, O Lord, that Thy judgements are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*"‡ And no less explicit is the declaration of Jeremiah, "*Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.*"§ Seek you now any further reason why you ought not to faint in the day of adversity? I will not force upon you the harsh, forbidding truth, that God is our Sovereign and our Ruler, and *therefore* has a *right* to do what He wills with us; nor will I insist on the no less fundamental truth, that we are all sinners by nature and by daily practice, and therefore deserving infinitely more punishment than we actually do, or possibly

* 1 Peter i. 6, 7. † Isa. xxiv. 15. ‡ Psalm cxix. 75.
§ Lament. iii. 32, 33.

can receive; I will not, I say, thus deal with you, because I have more *encouraging* assurances to give you: this indeed is my earnest desire and endeavour, in dependance on the Spirit's blessing, in collecting together from the bread of life,* these crumbs of comfort for your support in this the day of your adversity, in these, the hours of your sadness.—Let us inquire then, if we *do* faint in the hour of our trial, what are *the causes of our fainting?* They appear to me to be two; one is, because we have *no strength* to bear up against it; the other is, because *our strength is small.* I have here no need to say any thing on the former deficiency, since the words, *'thy strength is small,'* pre-suppose that there exists a portion, or at least a desire to attain a sufficiency, of strength; and likewise my chief object is to assist such characters, that is those who are *seeking,* not despising the Heavenly consolation. Why then, Christian friend, *is your strength small?* if it be not for want of asking, it is for want of asking *earnestly and constantly;* it is through lack of faith: He who soweth sparingly, must he not expect to reap sparingly? he who seeks for little, must not be surprised if he find but little: or it may be, *"you ask and receive not, because you ask amiss:"*† it may be, that you depend partly on Divine aid, and partly on your own, or some earthly source; there is probably too much self-confidence; or like Job, you may be skilled

* See Deut. viii. 3, Job xxiii. 12, II Cor. ix. 10.
† James iv. 3.

in administering the word of consolation *to others;* perhaps "*thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees,*" and you may have thought that it would be easy to apply the same remedy *to your own heart,* "*but now it is come upon thee and thou faintest; it toucheth thee and thou art troubled.*"* Oh! no; we must depend wholly and unreservedly on the strength which is offered us from above; we must take unto us the whole armour of God, laying aside as unsafe and cumbersome, any of our own providing: *the means* are given unto us, but *the hand* which directs them, and *the arm* which renders them effective, are from on high. But again I ask, why is your strength small? "*Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?*" "*Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*"† Can language frame a license more unlimited, a bounty more munificent? Pray, then, for what strength you require, and strength, equal to your day, shall be given you. But once more I ask, *why is your strength small?* Are not these rich, exceeding rich promises given to *you,* and *to you* are are not these glorious offers made? Undoubtedly, because they are universal; the winds convey them to the four quarters of the globe, and heralds of mercy, with an unlimited commission, are commanded to bear them "to every creature;" so that none, to whom they come, can say, that they are excluded. Do I say truth in this? Yes; because

* Job iv. 4, 5. † John xvi. 24.

none are excluded, save those who exclude themselves! the faithless and unbelieving are they who do so; the weak and faint-hearted do so; they who rest their hopes partly in heaven, and partly on earth, do so; and to these their strength is small; it is no wonder, consequently, that they should faint in the hour of adversity.

Finally, take this as a test; if you find your affliction too heavy for you, so that you seem ready to sink under it, be assured that the declaration of Solomon is true, and your strength *is* small, either misplaced, i. e. on a wrong foundation, or you have not applied, with all earnestness and unreserved sincerity, for the fulfilment of the promise to be manifested in your behalf, "*as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*"* Make then this discovery the ground of *renewed application:* remember that one, greater than Solomon, has said, "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*"† You have therefore all that the most faithless and fearful can desire; cry earnestly and unceasingly for a total surrender of yourself into the hands of God, since the assurance is, that "*all things*" shall not only be made to work *individually,* but shall "*work together for good*" to the people of God.‡ It is to those, and those only, who love the Lord, and delight themselves in Him, that the promise, with which I will conclude, belongs (for none other come under the description here given,) "*He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength.*"§

* Deut. xxxiii. 25. † II Cor. xii. 9. ‡ Rom. viii. 28. § Isaiah xl. 29.

XV.

NEHEMIAH II. 4.

THEN THE KING SAID UNTO ME, FOR WHAT DOST THOU MAKE REQUEST? SO I PRAYED TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN.

NEVER can we be thankful enough to God, for the various ways in which He has been pleased to convey instruction to us by His word; we have in it not only *direct* precepts, plain admonitions, clear and explicit rules for our conduct, and express promises for our encouragement, but also, in the lives of the most eminent of His servants, there are given to us *indirect* precepts, admonitions, rules, and promises. By these we learn much: for surely the scripture biography is not transmitted to us for the purpose of being read, wondered at, and so forgotten, as a tale that is told. No; when we have a history before us, 'the original speakers and actors need not be even remembered. We are alone in our closets with God; we are in devotion before Him; this is a portion of His word; what have we individually to do with it? what does it say to us? in what man-

ner does it reach our case? what use can we make of it, or what good derive from it?'*

With this feeling let us approach the words before us; and let us do so in earnest prayer unto God, that they may prove unto us, as He purposes them to be, words of instruction, encouragement and direction.

They are the words of Nehemiah, whom the Jews were wont to regard as one of the greatest men of their nation; and indeed there is something truly grand and noble in the whole of his history. He was of the royal family of David, but at the time here spoken of, one of the captive Jews in the Persian Court. In consequence of his excellencies, he was chosen to fill the confidential and honourable office of cup-bearer to the Persian king, Artaxerxes: though, doubtless, he lived in ease and honour, yet so great was his love for the ordinances of religion, and so great his desire to see the pure worship of the God of his fathers restored to its former dignity and solemnity, by the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the restoration of the temple, that he could not enjoy either. Grieved then in heart, he was, as might be expected, sad in his countenance; "*wherefore, as he bare wine unto the king, the king said unto him, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick?*" Though sore afraid, knowing the enmity of the king towards his God and the people of his God, yet he

* Scripture Reader's Guide, p. 86.

plainly and openly told him the truth, saying, "*Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?*" Let this be remembered for our encouragement, that the misery and distress of his country, had been made by Nehemiah, a subject of earnest prayer, weeping and fasting;* and here, in answer, an opening was made, a bright beam began to dawn upon him; for he says, "*then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request?*" I do not venture to assert that Nehemiah was astonished at this address of the king; for why should we be astonished and surprised if we receive that which we ask for? He was probably confounded at the goodness of Almighty God in thus designing to make him the honoured instrument of His intended benefit to His ancient people: he might also be astonished, at seeing the king receive so favourably the recital of his griefs, and manifest so much condescension and good-will towards him, as to ask him what he would wish to do in respect of them. But it was the will and purpose of Him, by whom "*kings reign, and princes decree justice,*"† to make Artaxerxes likewise instrumental in His design of mercy and relief.

Now, I pray you, mark well the conduct of Nehemiah. The words, "*So I prayed to the God of heaven,*" teach us these three things:—First, We

* See Nehemiah i. 4—11. † Prov. viii. 15.

must pray, if we wish for God's blessing. Secondly, We *shall* pray, if we value it. Thirdly, We *can* pray with *sealed lips*.—First, then, we *must* pray if we wish for God's blessing. We know that God can dispense His blessings according to His sovereign will, without being supplicated for them by us His creatures: but by His promise to *hear*, He has commanded us to *pray;* by His assured pledge that we shall *find*, He thereby bids us *seek;* besides this, it is for His glory that we should pray unto Him, and thus acknowledge our dependence upon Him. He is our Maker and Preserver, but He moreover condescends to call Himself *our Father;* must we not therefore, as expectant children, make known to Him our wants, not deterred from doing so because He already knows them! Oh it is a delightful privilege to be allowed to lay open our wants to Him who alone can relieve them; it is an unspeakable comfort to approach the throne of grace with our burden, assured that the ear of mercy is ever open and inclined towards us. However favourably, therefore, God may be disposed towards us, we must make known our requests unto Him. He most assuredly proposed the re-building of Jerusalem at that time; again did the Lord design to "*arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, was come;*"* but He would be glorified by the instruments He employed, and therefore He would

* Psalm cii. 13.

have Nehemiah to weep, to fast, and to pray for the accomplishment of His purpose: and having sent Nehemiah to enter upon his commission, He would undoubtedly prosper it; this, Nehemiah knew, but he did not, on that account, cease praying for assistance and success.

Secondly, *we shall or cannot but pray*, if we value God's blessing, and desire the light of His countenance. Tell a man who is ill, and unable to cure himself, where he may meet with a friendly physician, willing to render him gratuitous assistance, and he will hasten to tell him his wants, and describe to him his pains; and he, who has once experienced this kindness, will not need being told a second time, where to apply: so we, having the Word and faithfulness of God pledged to us, knowing that we may lay our wants before Him, and that it is our fault if we seek His face in vain, we cannot but pray unto Him, who has never yet said, "*Seek ye me in vain*,"† but who has promised to be, yea, who has shown Himself, our Almighty Friend, our great Deliverer: we need only be persuaded of *our inefficiency*, of *our poverty*, and "*the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus*,"* and we shall be found at that mercy-seat, whence never yet a faithful petitioner has been rejected. "*Believest thou this?*" Then act up to, and upon, thy belief. As truly as the needle of the compass points

* See Isaiah xiv. 19. † Ephes. ii. 7.

to the north, and as surely as the bickering flame towers in an upward direction, so surely will the afflicted believer be found where his distress will be alleviated, the hungry be waiting where he will be filled, and the mourner weep where his tears and his prayers will be regarded. Nehemiah knew this full well; he had newly experienced the power and the goodness of God, for he had particularly prayed, that God would *"grant him mercy in the sight of this man,"** the king, his master; and this prayer being so graciously answered, he was encouraged to pray for further counsel; *"so he prayed unto the God of Heaven."*

Thirdly, *We can pray when our lips are closed:* it needs not the external prostration of the body, the bended knee or the motion of the lips, to make our prayers heard; it is not always possible to offer these: when we walk, when engaged in business, or employed in our lawful calling, we may lift up our hearts to God in prayer: it requires not these outward accompaniments, to establish our faith, or manifest our confidence in God, though it is our duty to observe them when practicable: were it so, we could not comply with the apostolic direction, *"pray without ceasing,"* which intimates that we ought to live *in the spirit of prayer,* and thus be ready, on every emergency, to seek aid, guidance, and direction at the hand of God.† He disregards,

* Nehemiah i. 11.

† To the same effect is the following extract from the hea-

nay, He is displeased with, formal prayer; He delights to honour a praying spirit, an uniform dependance upon Him, a continual uplooking to Him, a spirit, such as Solomon recommends, saying, "*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge Him.*"* This was Nehemiah's case; He was engaged in conference with the king, and had neither time nor opportunity to present himself then on his knees before the Lord, nor spend long season in prayer; doubtless, therefore, before he made answer to the king, he lifted up his heart in secret prayer to "*the God of Heaven,*" and was heard, in that he trusted. A few moments spent in prayer, in the true sense and meaning of the word, are worth volumes of that lip service which thousands mistake for devotion, and fancy it acceptable to God. It has been well observed by one, "*whose praise is in the gospel through all the Churches,*" that "in all our concerns and undertakings, it is incumbent upon us. "*to commit our way unto the*

venly-minded Archbishop Leighton:—'Were we acquainted with the way of intermixing holy thoughts, ejaculatory eyeings of God in our ordinary ways, it would keep the heart in a sweet temper all the day long, and have an excellent influence in our ordinary actions, and holy performances. This were to 'walk with God' indeed; to go, all the day long, as in our Father's hand: whereas, without this, our praying, morning and evening, looks but as a *formal visit*, not delighting in that constant converse, which yet is our happiness and honour, and makes all estates sweet. This would refresh us in the hardest labour.'

* Proverbs iii. 5, 6.

Lord." nor can any situation or circumstance prevent us from calling down His help by an ejaculatory kind of address, which, though short and interrupted, generally discovers a peculiar ardour of mind, and prevails to obtain the blessing. *It may be used in a crowd as well as in the closet.**

Thus much we have learned from the example of Nehemiah, as pourtrayed in the few words before us. We may learn yet another lesson from him. We find, from his history, that he attributed every success which attended him, to "*the hand of God:*" if he designed any good, it was God that "*put it in his heart;*"† if he received any blessing, it was owing to "*the good hand of his God which was upon him;*" ‡ and if, in answer to his prayers, he expected any good, it was because he prayed earnestly to God to "*remember him for good.*" § Oh! look well to this, lest you forget God, and "*regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of His*

* Robinson's Scripture Characters, vol. ii. chap. 16.

To the same effect are the following observations of Bishop Hopkins:—"There is no man's calling doth so confine him, but were his heart and affections heavenly and spiritual, his thoughts would force a passage through the crowd of worldly business to Heaven. Ejaculations are swift messengers, that need not much time to deliver their errand, or much time to return again to the soul. You may point your earthly employments with heavenly meditations, as men do their writings, with stops, ever now and then sending up a thought into Heaven; and such pauses are no hindrances to your earthly affairs."

† Neh. ii. 12. ‡ Ibid. ii. 18. § Ibid. xii. 14, 22, 31.

hands." * Oh! pray for grace to profit by the examples which the Word of God presents in such rich abundance: and lastly, whilst you read these words, *"then the king said unto me, for what dost thou make request?"* think of Him who said, *"What will thou that I should do unto thee?"* † and consider, that if an *earthly* king will hear his people's cry, will not the ear of *the King of kings* be ever open to His people's prayer? Oh! yes: this we learn from our great High-Priest, Jesus Christ, who has taught us by a parable, *"that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* ‡

* Psalm xxviii. 5. † Mark x. 51. ‡ Luke xviii. 1—7.

XVI.

LUKE I. 13.

BUT THE ANGEL SAID UNTO HIM, FEAR NOT, ZACHARIAS. FOR THY PRAYER IS HEARD.

HAVE you ever considered the nature of *Prayer?* Do you believe it to be the confession of your necessities to Him who alone can relieve them?—the cry of poverty to him who is rich in mercy?—the application of one, who not only has, but also *feels* that he has, nothing,—to Him who has all things? Have you ever prayed *earnestly?* Have you ever prayed as you would to be saved from imminent danger? for that would be prayer. Do you pray with as much faith and confidence as you would to a fellow-creature, who should hold out to you gifts for your acceptance, saying, *"Ask, and you shall have?"* And in your prayers, have you *asked* for that of which you felt your *need,* and felt your *want* of that for which you *asked?* Have you *looked* for an answer to your prayers, *"watching in the same with thanksgiving?"** Have you given implicit credence

* Col. iv. 2.

to the word and the promises of God? or, is it possible that you have prayed for praying's sake, merely because you esteemed it a duty, a task, or even a service to God, and thought it a sin *not* to pray? These are important questions! how does your heart respond to them? Does it say '*peace*' to you? Have you the answer of a good conscience? or do you feel as if you knew not what prayer is, and that you are ignorant of its worth? If so, I would humbly hope, by God's blessing, to become a messenger of good to you, and bring you encouragement from His word.*

Consider then the words which gave rise to the above questions: "*But the Angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard.*" And who

* There is much truth in the following extract from Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul,—Works, vol. viii. p. 309.—'As you do not rank with professed Atheists, it is probable that you sometimes *pray*, to the Supreme Being. Amongst other blessings you implore of Him, in a peculiar manner, patience to sustain those afflictions, which are necessary to the perfection of virtue, Now if you are persuaded, that God is not only able *to hear*, but *to strengthen* you with His might; and further, if you believe, that when He thus strengthens you for the day of affliction, you shall have any perception of His influencing power; we are then perfectly agreed. But if you pray, *without a confidence that God attends to your prayer*, and without ever *expecting to receive the assistance you implore of Him*, you act like persons deprived of their reasoning powers: through the fear of praying like enthusiasts, you pray after the manner of idiots, and afford a manifest token of extravagant folly, as though you would entreat tempests to grow calm, or beseech rivers to return to their sources.'

could have borne more grateful tidings? *"Thy prayer is heard."* Our desires are, *or ought to be,* contained in our prayers; Zacharias had, without doubt, offered up many prayers for a son, but at this time, it was probably many years since he had made that request, *"for he was an old man, and his wife well stricken in years;"* yet God had heard his prayers, and treasured them up in the book of His remembrance. Thus does He deal with His praying people now, no less than in the days of Zacharias. Often do we think that *we are willing to pray, and God unwilling to hear.* Oh! no; the blame is with ourselves; it is want of faith and perseverance; for this and other reasons, He often will not answer us immediately; and when we least think or expect, or have perhaps ceased to remember our prayers, He condescends to answer them. Delay, therefore, must not produce *discouragement;* God may have long *granted,* though He may not choose, for a season, *to acknowledge,* the acceptance of our petitions.

How soothing and how grateful to Zacharias must have been this angelic salutation! how instantaneously must his fears have vanished, and his alarm subsided: how fervent also and intense his gratitude, on hearing the reason why he should not fear; *"thy prayer is heard."* Here is a theme for continued praise;—*"thy prayer is heard;"* here was a subject for exulting joy;—*"thy prayer is heard;"* here was a glorious recompense for *past* anxiety, an encouraging stimulus for *future* confidence.

K.

And now, dear reader, what do we learn from these few words? First, as respects the heavenly messenger, we must not imagine, that because angels are not dispatched from heaven, in these days, on messages of mercy, to tell mankind that their prayers are heard, that therefore we have no assurance that they do ascend with gracious acceptance before the mercy-seat: we have, if possible, a more sure, certainly *as sure* a proof of acceptance there, as if ten thousand angels bore to us the glad and joyful tidings; we have as the foundation of our hopes, *the word of God*, which, like Himself, "*abideth for ever;*" we have abundant experience of the truth of the promise, that "*whatsoever we shall ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive.*"* Regard then the achievements of prayer, of which you hear and read, performed, if I may so say, by others, as welcome as an angel's voice: or view, by faith, the angelic band recording your petitions as heard and answered, though they be not permitted to become, as joyfully they would be, the messengers of the glad intelligence to your expectant hearts.

Secondly, with respect to the angel's salutation, "*Fear not;*" the Bible says unto you "*fear not;*" clouds of witnesses say unto you "*fear not;*" and, above all, your Redeemer and great Intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ says unto you "*fear not;*" who then shall cause you to fear? if any, it will be your-

* Matt. xxi. 22.

self, for it is only those who are of little faith, who are fearful. Apply these words to yourself, and take them as coming immediately from God to yourself; for why should you not? why are they recorded, if only to bear witness of the gracious reception of Zacharias? were there published for all to read, a royal proclamation, giving pardon to certain offending rebels; or an account, which all might see, of some public bounty, bestowed on certain applicants; of what use would these documents be, were they not intended to convey the notice, that the like privileges and benefits would be extended to, and bestowed upon *similar cases?* What though *your case* were not *noticed,* you would feel yourself *interested, concerned, and encouraged.* Take then these words, and grapple with them, saying, 'Am I bid to "fear not?" then, by God's grace, "*though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*"'* Thus raise up your drooping spirits, and cheer your fainting soul; cast away all doubts and fears, come trusting, come believing, and you shall also come *rejoicing.* Why should it be any longer thought a thing incredible with you, that God should hear your prayers? Zacharias, David, Daniel, Paul, and Peter were men like yourselves, and no more able, than yourself, to prevail with God in prayer: God is unchangeable; what He was *to them,* what

* Psalm xxvii. 3.

He is *to others* now, such will He be *to you,* coming as they did, faithful and fearless, not "*presenting their supplications before God, for their righteousness, but for His great mercies.*" * Jesus Christ, the way of access, *to you,* as well as *to them,* ever liveth—yes, and *for what purpose* does He *ever* live? "*He ever liveth to make intercession for you.*"†

Lastly, remember that the testimony which was given to *others,* "*thy prayer is heard,*" is a pledge and a surety that the same shall be given to *you.* Oh! consider, *where* and *by whom* it shall be heard. It shall be heard in heaven, it shall be heard, accepted, and answered in due time: in due time, be assured your song of triumph shall be, '*My prayer is heard,* the Lord out of heaven hath heard the voice of my petition;' then shall you know for yourself, that the prayer of faith is *effectual* prayer; and if the answer be delayed, as in the case of Zacharias, yet shall your experience be added unto his; your "*soul shall make her boast in the Lord:*"‡ of yourself you shall say, "*I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears;*"§ and *others shall say of you,* "*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*"‖

* See Dan. ix. 18. † Heb. vii. 25. ‡ Psalm xxxiv. 2.
§ Psalm xxxiv. 4. ‖ Ibid. verse 6.

XVII.

DANIEL X. 12.

THEN SAID HE UNTO ME, FEAR NOT, DANIEL; FOR FROM THE FIRST DAY THAT THOU DIDST SET THINE HEART TO UNDERSTAND, AND TO CHASTEN THYSELF BEFORE THY GOD, THY WORDS WERE HEARD, AND I AM COME FOR THY WORDS.

Oh! what a cheering, animating, and faith-exciting subject is here presented to us! I will not therefore stay to enquire into the circumstances of the case; for why should I keep an afflicted sufferer in suspense, having promised him a rich spiritual treat? No! I too well know myself what anxiety is, and how little the mind can then brook suspense, when promises are at hand to revive a drooping spirit, and arouse a languishing faith. Let it suffice for us to observe, that an angel of the Lord, addressing Daniel in the words before us, through him, addresses all those, who like Daniel, by God's grace, set their "*hearts to understand, and to chasten themselves before God.*" May that God graciously be with him who writes, and with those who read, to comfort and establish both in faith and hope.

The angel said to Daniel, "*Fear not.*" The

word of God says to the people of God, "*fear not:*" the angel gave Daniel as a reason, "*for from the first day,*" &c.; the word of God holds out now the same, "*for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to chasten yourselves before God, your words, your prayers are heard.*" This is the heritage of the true believer; this, the sure, infallible consequence of our adoption among the children of God.

We will now, first, consider the conduct of Daniel as here described, applying it, at the same time to ourselves, in order that we may rightly ascertain whether we be walking *in the same way;* for if not we cannot expect to arrive *at the same point.* He "*set his heart to understand.*" In an enlarged sense we must be told, that by setting our hearts to '*understand,*' we mean a total, unconditional surrender of ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, unto God; manifesting also an entire submission to His will, in a cheerful, filial, and unfeigned confidence, as unto a tender, merciful, and compassionate Father; embracing, with all thankfulness, the offer, or rather receiving with all eagerness, *the gift* of pardon, peace and reconciliation through the blood of Jesus; and humbly acknowledging ourselves unworthy of this, His great favour, mercy and love; we must pray earnestly, trust simply, and wait patiently: the language of our hearts must be, "*Teach me to do Thy will, for thou art my God,*"*

* Psalm cxliii. 10.

and, "*I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart.*"*

But still further; Daniel "*chastened himself before his God:*" and what was this? He shall speak for himself: "*in those days, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks: I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I annoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.*"† Oh! how becoming is this duty to the afflicted Christian! but alas! how is it neglected! how consistent is this conduct in the believer, whose heart is troubled, whose spirit is disquieted: but alas! how greatly is it overlooked! If the soul and spirit *mourn*, should the body *rejoice?* if one member suffer, should not all suffer with it? I am persuaded, that, steering clear of the absurd and unscriptural practice of the Church of Rome in this matter, the benefit of fasting and abstinence, especially in seasons of affliction, is invaluable. Did not our Saviour set us an example?‡ did not His Apostles?§ does not experience teach us, that when the body is pampered and indulged, the mind is as

* Psalm xl. 8. † Daniel x. 3.

‡ Fasting is confirmed, as a duty, by our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. vi. 16) and as a duty in times of mourning, by His reply to the Pharisees, who told Him, by way of reproach, that His disciples did not fast so often as theirs, or John the Baptist's, (Luke v. 33—35). For examples of our Saviour's fasting, besides the extraordinary season, before He commenced His ministry, see Matthew xvii. 18. compared with verse 21.

§ See Acts x. 30; xiii. 2, 3; xiv. 23. 2 Cor. vi. 5; xi. 27.

little disposed for thought and serious exercise, as the body itself is for laborious exertion? how much more then, in spiritual things, will the enemy get advantage over us? And I am sure that every day's experience will testify against us, how indisposed we are to prayer, after we have fully satisfied the demands of our appetite; how much the soul suffers from too great an attention, not to *the wants*, but to *the supplies* of the body. Is it too great a sacrifice we are called upon to make, in order to more perfect enjoyment of spiritual communion with our God? I trust my fellow-Christian, this *is* not, or if it be, *that it may be no longer*, disregarded by you. Approve not the theory, while you neglect the practice; call it not popery; call it not puritanism: consider what Daniel did; do what he did, and you shall rejoice, even as he rejoiced, that he was enabled to mortify his lusts and subdue his desires.

This then is the remedy, this the refuge, this our duty, and our privilege, *prayer*, in its true meaning, *temperance, abstinence,* and *a devout meditation* on God's word, and covenant of love and mercy. This was the conduct of Daniel; and if, by God's grace, we can apply these rules *practically*, we shall be prepared to consider *joyfully*, the effect which followed his devotion, and with faith and hope to anticipate the same result ourselves.

* 'Because devotion is apt to grow dull and faint,' says Bishop Hall, 'there must be an exercise of faith and abstinence, to put an edge upon it, and stir it up.'

Let us observe that Daniel mourned *three full weeks;* i. e. he continued his daily course of prayer and abstinence, waiting with patient and fervent expectation, for a more perfect manifestation of the Divine will: he ceased not until the angel came. Now observe also that the angel tells him, "*from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand,*" &c., and in the next verse we find him saying, "*But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days:*" how truly there is it said, that "*from the first,*" his prayers were heard, though the prophet knew it it not! Well indeed can we imagine (if the suggestion of our fancy may be allowed) the Lord God of heaven thus giving the angel charge, "*My servant Daniel, behold he prayeth; go thou, and in due time, reveal to him my will; his prayer is come up unto me.*" Or in Scripture language, no fancy of the imagination, in Daniel's own experience, I may more beautifully set forth unto you the force of prayer, "*And whiles I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel . . yea,* WHILES *I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation, and he informed me—At the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee.*"* Judge then, if there be not

* Daniel ix. 20—23.

sweet encouragement in this; if there be not reason for hope amid delay, joy amid despondency, yea, assurance of victory in the stead of expectation of despair. Consider this, for this is the lesson for us; pray, pray, oh! pray without ceasing for three *weeks, months,* or *years:* Daniel ceased not: the answer was gone forth, though *"the time appointed was long,"* * before it was made known unto him: so may it be with you; like him then, continue your confidence in the use of the means of grace, sanctified and made effectual through the intercession of Jesus Christ. Obstacles may *postpone* the due fulfilment of your desires, but not *prevent* it: it may be, your faith is not perfect, not yet fully proved; it may be you are impatient; at all events there is a *need-be,* and an answer shall come in the appointed season, to the prayer of faith; that prayer, from the first day, is registered in Heaven, and shall be answered in the day that God sees best. He is not a man that He should forget or repent Him of His promises: † His ear is ever open and attentive unto the faithful supplications of His people: from the first day that you receive the adoption of children, you become an object of His special care, and your prayers rise up with acceptance before His mercy-seat. Of these, the sons and daughters of the Lord, it is said by their Heavenly Father, *"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I*

* Daniel x. 1. † Rom. xi. 29.

will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."* It is true, we cannot look unto the heavens, nor approach, in the flesh, the mercy-seat: but *it is given us* to look unto them, by faith, there to see the throne of mercy, and thereon our gracious God and Father inclining unto us His ear, oh! beautiful and affecting view! and His dear, all-prevailing Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, ever living to intercede for us, and offer up our prayers, oh! encouraging and soul-reviving sight! Nor must we forget that sacred Person of the holy and undivided Trinity, by whose inspiration, and by whose influence it is, that we are taught to pray, to call God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord:† oh! glorious and transcendant gift!

Pray therefore for faith, that you may endure unto the end. Oh! thank God for these assurances and encouragements; if duly sought for and contemplated, they will become more precious to you than thousands of gold and silver: if you be, through mercy, under the happy influence of them, you will be of the number of those, to whom we may lawfully apply the words of the Spirit, "*Thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed, that wait for me.*"‡

* Isa. lxv. 24. † Rom. viii. 16, 26. I Cor. xii. 3.
‡ Isaiah xlix. 23.

XVIII.

PSALM XXXVII. 7.

REST IN THE LORD, AND WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM.

WHAT sight so grateful to the storm-tossed mariner, as the discovery of land after a season of fatigue, danger, and distress? What stimulus so exciting to the weary and way-worn traveller, as the prospect of a warm shelter, and comfortable repose in the habitation of man? And how will these joys be increased, if that land, which the mariner approaches, be his *native* land! if the warm shelter which the traveller anticipates, be *his own fire-side!* Can you discover whither these observations tend? Has a corresponding chord vibrated in your bosom to these illustrations? Methinks they should excite these two: First, In my affliction and my anxiety I have a promised *rest.* Secondly, That rest is *given me freely, as my own, my* heritage and *my* privilege *for ever.* Oh! yes, there is a promised rest, or we should not be bidden to *"rest in the Lord;"* there

is "*balm in Gilead;*" there is manna for the hungry soul, peace for the troubled, strength for the weak, and rest for the weary: all the faithful, in every age of the Church, have experienced this rest, more or less; they can bear witness to its existence; and now the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, addressing every child of God, bids him "*rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.*"

It is evident, that I must here confine myself to those only, who profess at least to trust in the Lord; because the ungodly have not God in their thoughts, except as their Almighty Maker, and Sovereign Lord by Creation; and it is only those who *trust* in Him, that can possibly *rest* in Him: there is no rest, without the exercise of *faith* and *confidence.* To these then, how grateful must be the direction of David! what a pleasing train of thought and comfortable reflection must arise in the mind of the troubled soul, at the bare mention of the words, "*rest in the Lord!*" We know that after death, "*there remaineth a rest for the people of God;*"* and it is spoken of the future scene of glory, that "*there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;*"† but this is not all the Christian's privilege; it is given him, while a pilgrim in this vale of tears, while drinking of the cup of affliction, (a bitter draught indeed to the ungodly) while living in anxiety, doubt, and uncertainty, (a grievous trial

* Heb. iv. 9. † Job iii. 17.

indeed to the faithless and unbelieving) it is given him to enjoy, mentally and internally, a peace to which the nominal Christian is a total stranger; he commits his way unto the Lord, and is at peace; he spreads before Him his circumstances, his fears, his desires, and he rejoices in hope; he makes known his wants, and awaits, in God's own time, a gracious answer; he delights himself in the Lord, trusts in Him, continues instant in prayer, and is at rest; for *"when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."**

This then it is to *"rest in the Lord;"* believe His promises, await His mercy, confide in His faithfulness, acknowledge his past goodness, and endure unto the end, being assured that the issue will be perfect peace, whatever be the means employed, how dark soever and clouded the path may seem which leads to it; doing thus, you cannot but enjoy an inward satisfaction at the filial confidence which you will be sure to feel in the merciful dispensations of your God and Father; you will not fail, as a necessary consequence, to *"wait patiently for Him;* though your way should seem clouded, from various circumstances, you will bid your otherwise dispirited soul trust and wait, until, by the providence of God, some way-mark shall manifest itself; you will know in whom you have believed; you will rely securely, and confide joyfully in Him, to whom

* Proverbs xvi. 7.

you have looked up and prayed for guidance and direction. Though the time shall tarry, in the which you expect deliverance, you will wait patiently for it, knowing that it *will* come, that *your* time is not *God's* time, any more than *His way* is *your way*, or *His* thoughts, *your* thoughts; and knowing likewise that His time is best and fittest for His purpose. You know, and cannot but be assured, that His promises, like the other portions of His word, are holy, sure, and pledged; that His promise runs thus, "*Call upon me, and I will answer thee.*"* You believe that "*the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness;*"† and your faith will not let you impatiently inquire, "*Where is the promise of His coming?*"‡ Is not this then a glorious privilege? can any thing *earthly* afford similar consolation? where will you look for an anchor of the soul so sure and steadfast as this, "*rest in the Lord?*" or an antidote against despair, so safe and general as this, "*wait patiently for Him?*" Not in the world, for that shall pass away; neither in the things of the world; for we are commanded to "*love not the world, nor the things that are in the world;*"§ and if our rest were there, we should not be thus warned against it; neither shall we find these consolations in riches; for they "*certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven,*"‖ hardly can we expect therefore that *they* can give us rest. All

* Jer. xxxiii. 3. † 2 Peter iii. 9. ‡ Ibid. 4.
§ 1 John ii. 15. ‖ Prov. xxiii. 5.

these, and such as these, perish in the using; but the peace which we obtain by trusting in God, and His promises, through Christ Jesus, will bear reflection; it is consoling *in the past* view, support *in the present*, and encouragement *in prospect*: this causes us to "*wait patiently*." And lastly, as an additional encouragement, 'be assured that *waiting-time is most precious*; not a moment of it will eventually be found to have been lost; and not a moment of it could possibly have been spared. It is the preparation-time and work by which the Lord has been progressively moulding your heart for the reception of a more refreshing and abundant mercy.'*

* Bridges on Psalm CXIX. p. 212.

XIX.

EXODUS XIV. 13.

FEAR YE NOT, STAND STILL, AND SEE THE SALVATION OF THE LORD.

I HAVE, in another place, explained the use which we must make of the Historical parts of Scripture. They are, doubtless, delivered to us for our instruction; and the various events, which happened to nations and individuals, to the people of Israel, and the faithful servants of God, happened unto them for ensamples. And reason is, it should be so, or where were the use of recording them? We can be instructed by *the example* of thousands, or by the experience of one, more effectually than *by precept:* besides this, there is an almost endless variety of circumstances, recorded in Holy Writ, that *every one* may there find comfort and instruction, warning or admonition, direction or support, according to his individual necessity. Nor does this apply with less force to the history of *a people,* than of *one individual:* for as we are commanded "*not to follow a multitude*

*to do evil,"** why may we not be taught by a multitude, to follow that which is good, by them to learn what the will of the Lord is, and from them, as we may so say, receive His promise of assistance and protection?

Let us, therefore, now identify ourselves with the people of Israel, to whom the words above were addressed by Moses. The time, is the season of their being pursued by Pharaoh, and his arrival after them at the shore of the Red Sea: thus were they in a straight, and began, at this sight of their difficulties and apparent danger, to murmur, and repent at the steps they had taken in leaving Egypt, saying, "*It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*"† Oh! I much fear that we can find, in this rebellious and unbelieving conduct, something similar in the professing children of God: witness them sometimes in their sorrows; though they profess, with all thankfulness, to follow God, and cheerfully to submit to His Providence; yet, when the clouds grow dark, and the storm thickens about them, do they not murmur and repine, inwardly at least, against the hand which has led them thus far through their trials, and saved them in former troubles? And thus, notwithstanding they have the promise of the continuance of that same hand and outstretched arm, would they but believe, do not they say in effect, 'It

* Exodus xxiii. 2. † Ibid. xiv. 12.

had been better for us to have paid more court to *man,* and to have trusted more to *human means,* rather than be overwhelmed, as we now shall be?" The rebellion is similar in both instances, the ingratitude equally unjustifiable, and the unbelief equally uncalled for, and inadmissible: but, blessed be God, His mercy and forbearance are equally discernible in both cases: He fought then for the children of Israel, and He always *has* preserved, He always *will* preserve His people, *because He loves them:* and although the Christian's faith, at some seasons, is but feeble, and the remaining corruptions of hereditary disease manifest themselves in murmurings, yet their God and Father is still found fighting for them—*because He loves them;* and though they oftimes may be unwilling to suffer, to trust Him no further than they can see, and are impatient under their trials, yet He will not utterly *"forsake them for His great name's sake:"** He will assuredly return and have mercy upon them—*because He loves them, "because it hath pleased the Lord to make them His people."*† As He bid Moses say to the Israelites, so has He sent *them* His word, saying, *"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."* Our duty then is plain: fear not, look on with faith, stand ye, and see the success which the Lord's arm shall effect for you; the end which He shall put to your troubles; the calm which He shall

* 1 Sam. xii. 22. † Ibid.

send upon your anxieties; the accomplishment of your desires, which He, and He only, shall fulfil: *"I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end?"** *"Ye shalt not need to fight in this battle,"*† *"in quietness and confidence shall be your strength,"*‡ *"for the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."*§

But there yet remains *more encouragement:* not only was there a glorious triumph over the host of Pharaoh, and a deliverance wrought for the children of Israel, but *a final victory* over the Egyptians was to be the consequence of the salvation *"shewn them that day;"* for Moses was commanded to conclude his exhortation in these words, *"The Egyptians,*

* Jerem. xxix. 11. † II Chron. xx. 17. ‡ Isaiah xxx. 15.

§ Exod. xiv. 14. The following extract from the 'amiable' Vicar of Madeley, though on a different subject, is still very worthy of a place here. 'Some object, 'We have no might; and to endeavour to take the kingdom by violence, is taking the matter out of God's hand: Is it not better to wait for the promise, *Stand still, and see the salvation of God?*' If you mean by standing still, not agonizing to enter in at the strait gate, not wrestling in prayer, and fighting the good fight of faith; may God save you from this stillness! you err, not knowing the Scriptures. The standing still there recommended, is to possess your soul in patience, without dejection, fear, and murmuring. Stand still, as the Apostles, who watched together in prayer, ran with patience the race set before them, and fought manfully, as faithful soldiers, under the banner of the cross. *Any other stillness* is of the devil, and leads to his kingdom.'—Fletcher's Works, vol. viii. p. 419.

whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever: the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace:" and as the promise, so was the fulfilment; as was the word, so was the deed. Thus also shall *a final end* be put to the trials and sorrows of the believer; and this, in two ways; for to him there is a promise of *"a new heaven and a new earth,"* where *"there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:"* * after death, which shall be to him the gate of life, he shall be no more subject to trials of his faith, no more chastisements from the Lord, which, though they were sent *in mercy*, were not, for the time they endured, joyous, but grievous. And again, to him there is likewise this consolation in his afflictions—he shall see the face of his present trial *no more*, nor again suffer from its sting: having, by the power of the Lord, overcome it, it shall trouble him no more; it is one of the appointed number, which is therefore diminished, by the conquest over this. And is not this a consolation? We are to expect trials while sojourning on the earth in the flesh; but as their *power* is limited, so is their *number*, and not one more shall befall us than the God of Heaven sees fit; not one more than is needful; not one greater than we can bear.

But we must not forget, that thus much I can only say to those, unto whom the Word of God

* Rev. xxi. 4.

authorizes me to say, "*Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.*" Who then are they? Was it bidden to Moses to say to the Egyptians, or Joshua to the five kings at Gilgal, or Samuel to the Philistines, "*Fear not, be of good courage?*"* No; it was to the children of Israel, the people whom the Lord loved, and chose from among the nations, for His own. So likewise now, the exhortation and the promise are for the people of God, His children by adoption and grace; whether so called into that number by the "*still small voice,*" or led by the more severe, and less gentle, hand of affliction. It is to these, and these alone, that I dare address my observations; others I should be but mocking or deceiving.

This then being the case, are you, my reader, warranted in applying these words to yourself? Think you that you have good ground for rejoicing, and strong cause for exulting in the privilege of the Lord's inheritance? are you "*born again of water and of the Spirit?*" for remember how it is written, "*if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.*"† Are you passed "*from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?*"‡ Are you "*delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God?*"§ Is Jesus Christ precious unto you, as He is unto those who believe? Have you good reason for believing

* See Joshua x. 25. 1 Sam. xii. 20. † Romans viii. 9.
‡ Acts xxvi. 18. § Romans viii. 21.

that Christ is made unto you already, as He must be, before you can enter the kingdom of Heaven,—"*wisdom and rigteousness, and sanctification and redemption?*"* Whereas our thoughts and affections are, by nature and our inherent corruption, prone to grovel on *the earth,* are they, by grace, rising *heavenwards?* being, as the offspring of sin, carnal and worldly, are they, as the fruit of your adoption, serious and spiritual? These are tests sufficient, whereby to try yourself: Oh! do so and examine yourself candidly and humbly, whether these things be so in you or not; whether in one word, that great change has passed upon you, which *must* pass on every child of man, before he can become a child of God. Be not deceived by transient expressions, when suffering, of trust and confidence, of patience and resignation; mistake not *a sullen submission* for *a cheerful obedience,* nor *a chilling indifference* for *a willing and affectionate surrender* of yourself into the hands of your Heavenly Father. Take not the grief which you feel in your trials, for confessions of your sin and guilt; mistake not the tears of sorrow for the tears of repentance and *godly* sorrow, nor the anguish of your heart for the compunction of your conscience; nor consider the mere cry of "*Lord, save or I perish,*" as the infallibly earnest cry of a sinner, into the ear of mercy, for a share in the wonders and the mercies of Redeeming

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

love. If these fatal mistakes be made, I cannot promise a well-founded peace, or the promised consolations of the Spirit: for He dwells only "*with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*"* But if indeed your hopes be well-founded, surely built on Scripture-promises, and clearly evidenced by Scripture-proofs, (and even "*he that thinketh he standeth, must take heed lest he fall*"†) gladly do I say to you, "*Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord,*" which He Himself will surely bring to pass.

* Isaiah lvii. 15. † 1 Cor. x, 12.

XX.

ROMANS VIII. 28.

AND WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD. TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD.

We cannot but observe, how forcible and connected is the reasoning of the inspired writers! There is not a single word superfluous; not an argument deduced, without decisive proofs of its solidity and truth; not an assertion advanced, without the strongest possible assurance and conviction of its weight and importance. Jesus Christ Himself said, "*We speak that we do know;*"* i. e. we speak not from the hearsay of others, but from our own knowledge; we amuse not with "*cunningly-devised fables,*"† of man's invention, but we would convince by our own experience. St. John, speaking of Christ's crucifixion, says of himself, "*He that saw it, bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.*"‡ And again he proves himself to be a most competent

* John iii. 11. † 2 Peter i. 16. ‡ John xix. 35.

witness of the human nature of the Lord Jesus, by an appeal to his senses.* In the beginning of the chapter, from whence I have selected the subject of meditation, St. Paul introduces one of those demonstrative and conclusive words, of which he never makes use, without the introduction thereby of something striking and important, the application and truth of which cannot be mistaken, doubted, or denied: thus when he says, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,*" † the word '*therefore*' carries with it conviction and consolation. In like manner does he speak boldly and unhesitatingly, when he declares, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God:*" he does not say, '*we are told,*' '*we hear,*' or '*we believe;*' but '*we know.*' These observations cannot be extraneous, because it is of importance, as it is likewise an additional consolation to us, to know "*the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed,*" ‡ to be certified that our hopes and expectations cannot be disappointed, since nothing is asserted without authority, or maintained without proof.

Let us now enquire what it is, which St. Paul so confidently affirms. We will ascertain, first, *what is his assertion;* and secondly, if it shall seem strange, we will *enquire into his proof.*

* 1 John i. 1, 2. † Romans viii. 1. ‡ Luke i. 4.

His assertion is, that "*all things work together for good.*" All persons desire good; but all will not agree, either as to the definition of the term, or as to the manner of attaining it; and few will agree with the Apostle, in saying that *all* things work together for the promotion of good. But *he knew*, and therefore he believed; he believed, and therefore did he speak, and thousands more will, with him, bear testimony to the truth of this seeming anomaly and unaccountable paradox. None, however, I apprehend, will deny that good produces good; but we are taught to believe that *afflictions* and *trials* produce, and work together for *good;* this therefore we maintain.

They have a tendency to this beneficial effect in two senses: the one, by bringing the soul to a proper view of its state in the sight of God; by inducing it to seek a closer walk and communion with God; and no one ever enjoyed this privilege, but good came from it. Having however said somewhat on this subject, when enforcing the Apostle's exhortation to "*give thanks always for all things,*" I need not stay to confirm what I was then enabled to say, especially also, because I imagine *the second* sense to be the one which St. Paul had particularly in view. The other sense then, in which we maintain that *afflictions work together for good,* is this: those events or circumstances in our lives, which we call, and which seem to be, adverse and unfavourable, prove to be blessings in disguise, if we may

so say, by working together, in the issue, for our happiness and advantage. Take a Scripture example; the aged Jacob, being bereaved as he thought, of his son Joseph, "*refused to be comforted, and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning.*"* And again, when Simeon, his son, was detained in Egypt as a pledge, his youngest son Benjamin about to go down thither, in obedience to Joseph's demand, and calling to mind Joseph, whom he still believed to be dead, he exclaimed in the anguish of his heart, "*Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away:* ALL THESE THINGS ARE AGAINST ME;† but he knew not what was before him: it was left for Joseph himself, for whom he had mourned so bitterly, to reveal to him the mysterious providences of God, and to explain to him, how all things had been *working together* for his good, since the day he was taken from him. And in like manner did Joseph again set forth the overruling providence of God, in addressing his repentant brethren, "*but as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*" ‡ Time would fail me, were I to enumerate the instances similar to this, with which the Old Testament history abounds. God deals in a mysterious, but in a merciful way; and although clouds, dark, dreary, and forbidding, may for a season, obstruct

* Gen. xxxvii. 35. † Ibid. xlii. 36.
‡ Genesis i. 20.

the designs of mercy, and hide behind them the rainbow of love, *they* shall be manifest, *it* shall be exhibited, and make more sweet the enjoyment of those blessings which we fancied we had lost. The sun, if *always* shining in his glory and splendour, would lose half his beauty in our estimation; the luxury of a Summer's day would not be felt, enjoyed, or valued by us, half so much, had we no Winter's cold, no chilling blasts of bleak December: as wisely, as graciously is it ordained that "*Summer and Winter, and Day and Night shall not cease:*"* the *presence* of the one is the pledge for the *return* of the other. So it is true that the Christian's pathway may be clouded, for a time all may seem dark, and his hopes appear to be blasted. "*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal,* THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS:"† the believer may say with Job, "*The Lord knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*"‡ It is true the draught *may be bitter,* the course prescribed *may be unpleasant,* but it is not the *less efficacious.* Observe how comprehensive is the term "*all things;* " doubts, delays, crosses, disappointments and bereavements, all, all have their proper place assigned them by our Heavenly Father in working His mercies, and dispensing His blessings; for a time they *may,* and we know they *do,* seem crosses, adverse and overwhelming; our wishes

* Genesis viii. 22. † 2 Tim. ii. 19. ‡ Job xxiii. 10.

may, for a time, seem thwarted; it is but to *further* them, and make them productive of more lasting enjoyment; we may fancy, that we are losers; but we shall be gainers: our plans may be opposed; it is but that they may finally succeed, and the success be more pleasurable: we may have fear upon fear; but then we have promise upon promise, which bids us fear not, for greater is He who is for us than all that can be arrayed against us.

Thus it is that all things shall work together for our good; for, first, they bring us to live nearer to our God: (and shall we be near Him, and not partake of His holiness? shall we be holy, and not happy?) and secondly, they will be the means of causing us to live in a state of dependence, to live a life of faith and confidence in His mercy; and sure we are, that no one ever thus lived, and was forsaken or confounded. This is God's design, *"that He may humble us, and that He may prove us, to do us good at our latter end."**

Does now this seem strange to any? Does it appear that I have promised seeming contradictions, or palpable absurdities? Stay and consider of whom I have been speaking: I have been recounting privileges and immunities which belong to a certain people. What says the Apostle? *"And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God."* This explains at once the seeming

* Deut. viii. 16.

anomaly; now speak I plainly; to those who love not God, (and here I speak not of that love which the world professes, the profession of the lips, but denial of the life, the love of the tongue, but not of the heart,) to those, I say, who love not God, I have not been addressing myself: to such I should be indeed, on this subject, "*a miserable comforter;*" I should tell them plainly, that their "*iniquities have separated between them and their God, and their sins have hidden His face from them, that He will not hear;** and that their transgressions will be their ruin, unless they make haste, and "*turn to the strong hold,*"† with weeping, with mourning, and with prayer.

Consider then, *O happy sufferer,* who lovest thy God, "*consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee,*"‡ in love, not in anger; in mercy, not in wrath; for thy benefit, not thy injury; for *thy profit,* not *His pleasure.* And is not this reasonable? Is it strange, that a father should consult the good of his children? Is it to be wondered at, that God, our Heavenly Father, should purpose the good of *His* children! His way therefore of promoting it, is the best possible way of so doing: and though it *seem* strange, yet "*think it not strange, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*"§ Mercy attends the rod which chastens;

* Isiah lix. 2. † Zech. ix. 12. ‡ Deut. viii. 5.
§ 1 Peter iv. 12.

sweet is mixed up with the bitter; good is the consequence of the apparent evils arrayed against you.

What think you now? Is the Apostle's assertion true? Does he seem to assert that which, in your present trial, you cannot easily credit? If so, bethink you, I pray you, what is the reason: Does he, influenced and moved by the Holy Ghost, speak falsely, or are you not a child of God, and therefore not entitled, by adoption, to call this privilege your own? If there be any doubt in your mind, fall down upon your knees, *"lift up your heart, with your hands, unto God in the Heavens,"** begging earnestly for the teaching of the Holy Spirit,† and the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ,‡ that you may become a new creature in Him: then and then only, by God's constraining grace, having become such, you will say, *"Now I believe, not because of thy saying,"* for I know now of a truth, that *all things* DO WORK TOGETHER *for good to them that love God."*

* Lamen. iii. 41. † Rom. viii. 26
‡ Romans viii. 34. Heb. vii. 25.

XXI.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 6, 7.

BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING; BUT IN EVERY THING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKSGIVING, LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN UNTO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING, SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.

How often have we read these words, and yet have neglected to observe *the command, duty, admonition, and promise,* contained in them! for we cannot but confess, that we have been troubled and careful about *many* things, and that in *few,* if indeed in any, we have, *by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, made known our requests unto God;*" consequently we cannot wonder, if the peace of God has not kept our hearts and mind through Christ Jesus.

The worldly man, and the characters, who take up the sacred volume, only for the purpose of *reading* it, and who then dismiss it, with a satisfaction far greater than any they experienced, or hoped to experience, in taking it up, will scarcely be supposed desirous of entering with me, into

an examination of the beauties and encouraging directions which the words exhibit: they will tell me that it is impossible to *"be careful for nothing,"* and equally absurd and unreasonable, *"in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make known our requests, with thanksgiving."* I turn then, in hope of gaining a willing ear, to those who, like myself, have often read these words in vain, but who still desire to *"understand what the will of the Lord is,"** and with Samuel, to manifest a ready obedience thereto, saying, *"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."*† May the *"Holy Spirit of promise"* be with us, that wisdom and knowledge may be given us to *discern*, and grace and power bestowed upon us to *obey*, the will and word of our Heavenly Father; with faith to receive His promises of peace and love, through Christ Jesus.

First, we find *a command, "be careful for nothing:"* this command, be assured, would not be given us by the Lord, in a world where trials and temptations, losses and disappointments, doubts and anxieties, are the appointed lot of man, were it not that a corresponding *promise* is given, *"He careth for you;*‡ were there not also abundant encouragement held out to us for casting our cares, our *every* care upon Him; and were it not for our interest and happiness, to study to be really *"careful*

* Ephes. v. 17. † I Sam. iii. 10. ‡ I Peter v. 7.

for nothing." God does not deal so harshly with His creatures; by His command to be thus careful for nothing, He has pledged Himself to relieve us, when we cast on Him our cares; as by His command *to ask*, He promises that we shall *have*, and by his invitation to *seek*, He assures us we shall *find*. Tell me then, of what shall we be guilty, we who profess to be the Lord's, if we be troubled or disquieted, when He bids us be *at ease*, and "*careful for nothing?*" Shall we not be guilty of the grossest unbelief, by doubting that which He has, in mercy, declared,—by disobeying that which, for our benefit, He has commanded? Oh! leave such ingratitude for those who know not God, who will not acknowledge Him *in any*, much less *in all* their ways: Oh! come and taste the pleasure, experience the transcendent peace and consolation which *they* enjoy, who, (not by a sullen submission and confession of their lips, commit their way unto God, because they are unable to alter His decrees; but who,) in faith and childlike obedience, cheerfully commit their way unto Him, not resting on the means which they use, or the plans which they follow: in their minds, in the place of that continual suspense and uncertainty, which the same events and circumstances create in others, there is a peaceful calm, a present ease, and a cheering prospect:* they hold, and they enjoy, sweet con-

* Let us observe the directions of the excellent Archbishop

verse with their Heavenly Father; nothing is really grievous to them, because they undertake every thing, *in reference to His will, in dependence upon His promises, in hope of His blessing, in full and faithful expectation of a joyous issue:* it is thus that they feel assured, that no scheme will really fail, no hope be really disappointed, because they will always discern the love of their Father, even redeeming love, overruling all things for their good; His voice they well know, and will hear, and because they know it, they will gladly obey it.

But this is not all; this is a *negative* command; we are next exhorted, "*in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known unto God.*" We are not only here taught that which all Christians profess to do, i. e. to *pray* unto our God and Father, to make known to Him, *as our God and Father,* our requests, arising from a feeling of our necessities; their is still a higher Christian duty incumbent upon us, which is perhaps too commonly neglected: But first let us bear in mind, that the only way in which we *can* be "*careful for nothing,*" is by means of the duty here enjoined us, *prayer and*

Leighton; he says, 'Nothing doth so establish the mind amidst the rollings and turbulency of present things, as both a look *above* them, and a look *beyond* them; *above* them, to the steady and good hand by which they are ruled; and *beyond* them, to the sweet and beautiful end, to which, by that hand, they shall be brought.'

supplication: without prayer there must be care; there is a sensible difference between being not careful, trusting to God; and being reckless, trusting to *chance;* the existence of which ideal thing is not, for one moment, entertained by the true believer. The Christian, who prays and believes, must be *the former;* the infidel, the prayerless, as also the faithless in prayer, must be *the latter.*

Now this duty of prayer must, I say be followed by a higher Christian duty, "*let your requests be made known* WITH THANKSGIVING;" not in one particular request only, but in "*in every thing;*" not only whilst praying for a continuance of peace *in prosperity,* but whilst supplicating for assistance, *in adversity,* must the voice of joy and thanksgiving be heard: we must thank God for *past* mercies, and acknowledge them in our petitions for *future* blessings; the remembrance of His love in past dispensations, must encourage us to persevere with thankfulness in our present applications; the fact of His having inclined His ear to us in our former hour of need, must bring to our grateful recollection, that "*His ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear:*"* so that thanksgiving must accompany our faith; our hearts must give praise, whilst they sue for fresh mercies. And again, something more is

* Isaiah lix. 1. In this manner did David continually reason; "Because Thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice." Psalm lxiii. 7: He would not 'let go' the hand which had so often upholden him.

N.

required of us; we must not fail to give thanks unto God, *for the honour and privilege which we enjoy,* in being allowed to approach *at all* His throne of grace, as petitioners, making known our requests; well indeed is it for us, my fellow-sinners, that we are permitted to appear there as *condemned sinners,* pleading for *pardon;* much more then are we bound to give thanks, in that we are so graciously invited to go, and bidden to go expectant, as those who have *requests to make,* or *favors to beg.* But yet once more; we must go still further in our thanksgivings: are we not warranted in giving thanks for the very blessings we are asking for, *equally the same as if we had received them?* This is indeed strong, Abrahamic faith; and why, I ask, should it not be so? I would not intimate this, did I not conceive, that the words of our Saviour really mean that which He intended to convey, when He gave them utterance: He says, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*"* Are we to take these words literally, or are we not? I dare not say, that we are *not,* because no double or figurative meaning can be attached to them: and if we *are* to understand them literally, where is the fault, if we have not that which we ask for? It is with ourselves: we ask amiss, we are *faithless,*

* John xiv. 13, 14.

unbelieving, doubtful, or *weary of waiting.* This surely is not the way in which to treat the gracious offer of Omnipotence! we should not so deal with an earthly benefactor: it was not thus that queen Esther availed herself of the permission of Ahasuerus;* it was not thus that the daughter of Herodias treated the offer of the cruel Herod:† when the kings and princes of the earth make offers to their favourites, their word is believed, and men make known their requests with thanksgiving, because they know that the word of their king is sure, and that his promise shall be fulfilled: but when the King of kings condescends to make more noble proposals, and invites us to come unto Him, with "*whatsoever we will,*" and "*ask any thing;*" with a corresponding promise, "*that will I do,*" and "*I will do it,*" our hearts are fearful, distrustful, and unbelieving! St. John thus testifies to the believer's privilege; he says, "*and this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us.*"‡ These promises, these rich offers are made unto us, without any limitation *on His part,* who makes them; but *on our part,* to whom they are, in mercy, made, our requests must be made known *with faith, with thanksgiving, and according to His will, with a view to His glory:*§ then will He

* See Esther v. 3, 6. vii. 2. † See Mark vi. 22—25.

‡ 1 John v. 15.

§ To undertake every thing with reference to the will of God, and with a view to His glory, should be our object: this should

hear us, "*and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*"* And this is the ground of our thanksgiving. Who then are they, who obey the command, and, as St. Paul did, "*make request with joy?*"† those they are, who know in whom they have believed, who love the Lord with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their strength; and desiring His glory, commit themselves into His hands, as the God who loves them, and cares for them. If they do not this, they will not, they cannot trust themselves to Him, because they will fear; and where there is fear, there is no love; where there is love, there is no fear, for "*perfect love casteth out fear.*"‡

To these, and to these only, can, by any possibility, the promise of peace be given. And what is this? it is not the peace, the delusive peace, which the world esteems; it is the peace of God, coming from the God of peace: it is "*the peace of God which passeth all understanding*"—all understanding in contemplation, not in the fruition or enjoyment of it: this peace "*shall keep their hearts and minds*

form *the foundation of our desires*, it will then be *the subject of our petitions*; and this will be a ground of rejoicing and consolation. 'What a blessed thing it is *to lose one's will!* Since I have lost my will, I have found happiness. There can be no such thing as *disappointment* to me, for I have no desire, but that God's *will* may be accomplished.'—*Memoir of Dr. Edward Payson.*

* 1 John v. 15. † Phillippians i. 4.

‡ 1 John iv. 18.

through Christ Jesus;" in, and by whom all our blessings flow; none are derived, or descend to us *in any other way;* He purchased *all* things for us by His death, and He bestows them, as His own peculiar gift and purchase, on whom He will; they who receive the gospel offer of salvation receive the privileges of sonship, and *all things are theirs,* all things work together for their good; all is peace with them; for where there is no care, there must be peace; where there is confidence there *shall* be, for there *must* be, quietness and repose. But these riches are not to be enjoyed, *but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving;* they are not for the wavering and the faithless: for they are privileges too valuable, this is a heritage too precious, for any, except the children of God. Say then to yourself, my reader, *'Am I one of the happy number?'* Oh search and look: try; examine yourself by the only test of truth, the only certain guide, *the Word of God:* do so in humility, with candour, with earnestness; above all, with fervent prayer: cease not but with your departing breath, if you have not, until then, obtained peace with God, through Jesus Christ, cease not to cry mightily unto God, to *"create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you;"** for until this be given you, there is no peace for you here, no hope of heaven, no prospect of future blessedness; the happiness which you hope for in

* Psalm li. 10.

heaven, must be *begun*, or at least the foundation of it must be laid, *on earth*. May you fully experience the truth of this, and speedily begin to enjoy a sweet foretaste of those rich treasures, which are prepared, reserved and laid up in heaven for *the ransomed and redeemed of mankind*. Amen.

XXII.

JOB V. 17.

BEHOLD, HAPPY IS THE MAN WHOM GOD CORRECTETH; THEREFORE DESPISE NOT THOU THE CHASTENING OF THE ALMIGHTY.

The whole scheme and system of religion is a seeming paradox and an unintelligible anomaly to thousands of mankind; even to thousands of those, who profess to have a *knowledge of it:* there is a darkness in it, which they cannot penetrate, a hidden mystery, which they cannot unravel: they *"put darkness for light, and light for darkness; they put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."** They profess to receive the Word of God, with becoming veneration; but finding things in it hard to be understood, they will not care to understand them; they find commandments there, which militate against their practices, *therefore they must be explained away:* real religion, with them, or *in their estimation,* produces gloominess; the comforts of the Gospel (say

* Isaiah v. 20.

they) generate seriousness; faith begets assurance; and assurance is enthusiasm.*

How clearly is this truth illustrated in the words before us! how differently will they be received by the carnal, and by the spiritual mind, by the children of this world, and by the children of light! what different ideas are excited in their minds on hearing the first words, "*Behold, happy is the man whom God*"—and, as different notions of happiness arise in their imagination, whilst awaiting the conclusion of the sentence, so, very dissimilar is the manner in which they will receive the declaration, "*Behold,*

* It is a common saying of one's friends, when the grace of God has been manifested in our hearts, by turning them from darkness unto light, that 'such an one has become *serious!*' thereby intimating that he is now *an object of pity*, for his days of happiness are gone, and he is now inevitably devoted to melancholy! How faulty and incorrect is the idea, *they* best can tell, who have entered into *the joy* of their Lord. Has forgiveness of sin a tendency to make men *serious*? Is assurance of pardon and acceptance with God the precursor or the origin of *melancholy*? *Hail such seriousness, and bid thrice welcome such melancholy!* I find nothing but calls to the people of God *to rejoice and joy in the Lord!* I find the Lord declaring that His *servants* shall "*sing for joy of heart,*" but His *enemies* shall "*cry for sorrow of heart; and shall howl for vexation of spirit.*" Isaiah lxv. 14. I find call enough for *the ungodly* to be *serious*, and warnings enough to make *them melancholy;* to which if they will attend, their *sorrow shall be turned into joy.* 'It cannot but be matter of very dreadful consideration to any one, sober and in his wits, to think *seriously* with himself, what horror and confusion must needs surprise that man, at the last day of account, who has led his whole life by one rule, when God intends to judge him by another.'—*South.*

happy is the man whom God CORRECTETH :" to the one they will appear absurd; to the other, gracious and cheering; to the one, a contradiction in terms, "*happiness in correction!*" to the other, the assurance of paternal tenderness, and divine consistency, "*mercy in judgment.*" Now whence can this difference arise? it is one and the same plain declaration, made to individuals, alike acknowledging the Divine origin, and therefore *the truth* of the Scriptures: whence then this strange contrariety of opinion? Look, I pray you, into your own heart first, and there ask in which way *you* receive these words: 'Am I' (say within yourself, you who are afflicted,) 'am I disposed to believe that *he is happy* whom God correcteth? *is it happiness* TO ME, *now that I am under correction?*'

Now since this assertion has been proved, by the experience of thousands, to be true, *the correction of God* and *the correction of man* must be different in their end and intention. St. Paul, in a striking manner, contrasts them; he says, "*We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us, after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.*"* Having, in the former verses of the chapter, explained how God, in His

* Heb. xii. 9, 10.

chastenings, dealeth with us as children, he clearly and plainly proceeds to point out the distinction and difference between our earthly parents and our Heavenly Father, in their corrections or chastisements of us, their sons in the flesh, and in the spirit: when the fathers of our flesh correct us, we give them reverence, though it be forced and constrained; ought we not then much rather to give *a willing obedience,* and be in *voluntary and cheerful subjection,* to the Father of spirits, and so live, and not perish through rebellion or disobedience?* And why? for they indeed chasten us *for their pleasure,* but He *for our profit,* that we may, by the trial and victory of our faith, in the strength of His grace, become partakers of His holiness; they, *for a few days,* in comparison of eternity, chasten us, but He, *for our eternal benefit,* since His holiness is everlasting. Coming then to a conclusion such as this, we exclaim, "*Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth;*" for "*whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth;*"† the

* Here, as Dr. Doddridge observes, is a tender insinuation of the terrible consequences of rebellion against God: it is one of the many instances of the Apostle's forcible manner of suggesting the most weighty thought in an oblique manner, and in few words. There is an evident allusion to the punishment which was to be inflicted upon "a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and that, *when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them.*" Deut. xxi. 18, &c.

† 1 Heb. xii. 5, 6.

exhortation to be deduced from this, is, "*therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:*" reject not the hand which holds out mercy to you, though in so doing, it pierce you through with many sorrows; cast not away the cup which contains the remedy for your disease, though the draught be bitter; drink the very dregs thereof, with all thankfulness; mistake not your friend for an enemy, your tender Father, for a malicious persecutor; for although "*no chastening, for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, to them which are exercised thereby.*"*

But we must now make that important distinction, which is necessary to be observed in the application of these words. Surely we may not say, that happy is *every one who is afflicted;* that were absurd; but we say, that, happy is every one whom God *correcteth,* by means of affliction; he must be *corrected* by the chastisement, and brought to a sense and confession of his *unworthiness of mercy;* and *worthiness of judgment:* if he remain obstinate and hardened, *he is not corrected;* if still full of murmurings and repinings, *he is not happy;* he regards God, if he regard Him at all, as an angry, unjust Master, and therefore I say, he is not corrected; he views His dispensations as punishments, His punishments as unjust, and therefore he is not

* Heb. xxii. 11.

softened; it is not thus, that the trials of our faith will profit us: God's chastenings must be endured; they must be accepted as they are sent; received as they are offered; in love not in anger; in kindness, not in wrath. Call then this to mind, and hence you shall have hope, "*To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not; for He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.*"* Let it lead you to seek a closer union with Him, who "*abideth for ever:*" it is a blessed privilege to believe, that all the dispensations of our Heavenly Father are ordered by Him in the tenderest love† *There is no wrath in the cup* which He gives us to drink; and how encouraging and delightful, in whatever circumstances we may be placed, whether life or death be before us, to be enabled, by His grace, to submit our wills wholly unto His, and to lie passive in His hands, knowing that he does all things well, and that *all* his appointments for us, shall work together *for our final good.* Again, therefore, I say, "*despise not the chastening of the Lord;*" do not overlook or disregard it as a matter of course, or a thing of chance; neither mistake it, but receive it as the voice of God, as a messenger from heaven,

* Lament. iii. 33, 36.

† "Take all afflictions as *tokens of God's love to thee*, and *trials of thy love to Him*, and purposes of kindness to enrich thee, and increase more plentifully in thee His blessed gifts and spiritual graces, if thou persevere faithfully unto the end: not leaving off the vehement desires of His love, and thy own perfection."—*Leighton's Rules for a holy life. Section* 5. *Rule* 4.

sent to convey unto you the glad tidings of your adoption and sonship. Such chastenings truly rank among *the sweetest privileges of the believer:* consider how the Lord Jesus speaks of them *as baptisms, "I have a baptism to be baptized with: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished:"** how applicable is this term! afflictions truly are baptisms to God's own children, when commissioned by His grace, and blessed by His Spirit. Oh! never lose sight of them in this view: remember that He, who in the days of His flesh, felt these straitenings, doth now feel them, *in and for His people!* Oh! pray the Lord, that His *"waves and His billows"*† may not pass over you, but bring you, according to His will, under the baptism of His Spirit. Remember that of whatsoever earthly good you are thereby deprived, it is nothing in comparison of the love of God; whatever you may lose by affliction, if you be a child of God, you cannot lose the enjoyment of that privilege, the love of God, and the peace of God; for He has thus promised you, when you feel, as it were, the hidings of His face, *"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have compassion on thee."*‡ Yes, God's corrections are the truest evidences of His

* Luke. xii. 50. † Psalm. xlii. 7.
‡ Isaiah. liv. 7. 8.

love, and by the teaching of the Spirit, they are *means of sanctification; "for He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole:"** that is, when God wounds by the rebukes of His providence, He purposes to heal by the consolations of His Spirit.†

Have I now set strange things before you? Is there, do you think, *happiness in God's corrections, mercy in His judgments, and love in His chastisements?* We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; receive then my witness, when I declare that which I am commanded to declare, *"Happy is the man whom God correcteth:"* it was the testimony of the Psalmist, as it is of every child of God, who suffers from the hand of God, *"The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He hath not given me over unto*

* Job v. 18.

† Let us observe another very beautiful extract from the Correspondence of the exemplary but unfortunate Director of Port Royal, from the Memoirs before quoted: "Happy that child, whom the Heavenly Father so hedges in, as not to suffer him to escape from beneath His chastening hand. There is no greater mark that God accounts us His children, than that He not only inflicts tribulation, but that He supports us under it, and walks with us through it. What we have to fear is not the Cross, but that we should be so unfortunate as not sufficiently to esteem its uses, to want grace to profit by it, and to reap the whole of the rich harvest which the harrow was intended to prepare. Great indeed is the spiritual hardness of that heart which does not feel thankful to God for treating it as He treated His own Son. He little prizes his master, who refuses conformity with Him: The servant contemns his Lord who spurns His livery. Vol. 1 p. 386.

*death."** If he send blessings in the guise of afflictions, they are not the less on that account to be considered blessings; His providence may appear to frown, but His face will assuredly shine;

> Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
> But trust Him for His grace;
> Behind a frowning Providence,
> He hides a smiling face.

He may seem to have *"forgotten to be gracious, and in anger to shut up His tender mercies,"*† but peace, love, and mercy are His peculiar attributes, and in due time He will deliver and exalt those whom he had seemed to punish and forsake.—Finally, I repeat, mistake not His chastenings, frustrate not, by unbelief and fear, His merciful intentions towards you; bear in mind, that "it is the *non-improvement of an affliction* that makes it *a curse;* whereas, if improved, it is as great a blessing as any God is pleased to scatter amongst the children of men. And therefore it is, that God most frequently intrusteth this *precious talent* with his own peculiar people: "'*You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.*'"‡ Amos iii. 2.

* Psalm cxviii. 18.

† Psalm. lxvii. 9.

‡ Beveridge, Private Thoughts, p. 261, Glasgow Edition.

XXIII.

HABBAKUK III. 18.

YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD, I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION.

BELOVED, these are words of a true child of God; they bespeak that confidence and that faith, which belong only to him, who can truly call God his Father. This language of the lips tells us at once what is the state of the heart, for here the tongue *is* an index; for how else, were it not so, could the lips of the afflicted prophet utter these words, which so plainly set forth his determination to receive aright the chastening of the Lord? The words "*rejoice*" and "*joy*" would come but with an ill grace from the mouth of the worldly man in his adversity; indeed they would sound but strangely in his ears. It is here then that the difference between the godly and the ungodly is clearly developed: by their conduct in the hour of their trial, we may discover which of them has built on the

right foundation; the hope of the one shall sustain him, the hope of the other shall perish.

Let us consider the words of the Prophet. Did we divest them of the monosyllable which stands at their head, we should be presented only with the disposition of mind, common to the Christian, as natural to him as the air he breathes; for who, having once tasted that the Lord is gracious, will fail to "*rejoice in Him?*" who, knowing the salvation of God, will forego the privilege of "*joying in the God of his salvation?*" But the words, as they stand before us, "*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation,*" present unto us an important duty, and likewise an essential privilege of the child of God. The preceding verse explains this; the prophet says, "*Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet,* (says he in the confidence of his faith) *I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.*"

Hence we are instructed in these three things; we learn, first, our *resources* in the hours of trial and sorrow; secondly, *the result* of seeking this resource; thirdly, *the reason of this result.*

First then, the usual *resource* of the true children of God, in general,—of the Prophet before us, in particular,—and ours, in imitation of them, is, *prayer;* this has constituted a main part of the spi-

ritual armour which they have constantly sought, the refuge unto which they have invariably betaken themselves in the season of affliction. To this effect Isaiah says, "*Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them.*"* And the prophet Jonah says, "*When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto Thee in Thy holy temple.*"† And likewise the Prophet Habakkuk is heard *to pray*, before he can give utterance to those remarkable expressions of faith and filial submission: he first begs of God, that He will "*in wrath remember mercy;*" and while meditating on God's majesty, with holy fear, he "*trembled in himself, that he might rest in the day of trouble.*" There is, indeed, no other antidote against despair; no other resource in the day of temptation, or the hour of trial; consider how suited to our necessities is this honour and this privilege of drawing nigh to God, and of unloading our griefs before Him! An honour, and a privilege, and a blessing it is; for He is a God who heareth prayer, and never turns away His ear from the cry of the poor and needy who come unto Him, in and by Jesus Christ.

Being then thus armed and strengthened by prayer in the time of adversity, when clouds are gathering and human arms fail us, we are ready to experience and expect *the result*, of this resource, and

* Isaiah xxvi. 16. † Jonah ii. 7.

to exclaim "*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.*" If prayer do not this for us, it does nothing; and in offering it we do but mock God, and delude ourselves. But I am to speak of the result of fervent, faithful prayer, of that which is effectual. I am also addressing those, who, I fain would believe, have sown the seed of hope and earnest expectation; who, having sown, expect to reap; being hungry, wait to be filled; confessing their need, hope to be satisfied; crying mightily, know they shall be heard; having sought faithfully *the appointed resource,* await joyfully *the promised result.*

Those, who in this manner, wait upon God, and kiss the rod which chastens, know full well in whom they have believed; they are persuaded, that "*perfect peace*" shall be the portion of him whose mind is stayed on the Lord; and in this will they be confident. Though outward difficulties may assail them, they are assured, (since He who made them is able to preserve them; He who has pardoned and accepted them in the beloved, will not fail to bless them) they are assured, I say, that all will be well: they are entitled and privileged to plead with God, as their Heavenly Father, and in the name of Christ, to remind Him of His promises. We know that there is no duty or commandment enjoined us in Scripture, without a corresponding promise; and no promise without a pledge. If we are bidden to "*hearken unto the statutes and the judgements, which*

we are taught, to do them," the annexed word of exhortation and encouragement is, *"that we may live."** when exhorted to *"believe in the Lord our God and His Prophets,"* we are told, *"so shall ye be established and prosper;"*† if we *"sow bountifully,"* we know that we shall *"reap also bountifully;"*‡ if we *"commit our way unto the Lord,"* it is (or if not, it is our fault that it is not) on the assurance, that, *"He will bring it to pass."*§ And lastly, if in adversity, and midst of desolation, we trust to, hope in, and submit ourselves wholly unto our God, it is promised, that we shall have grace and strength given us, by the which we shall be enabled to triumph, *to be glad and rejoice in the God of our salvation.*

It now remains for us to investigate *the reason* of this rejoicing; to learn *whence* the Prophet derived that strength by which he could be thus "patient in tribulation." Hear his own words; few they are, but choice; *"The Lord is my strength:"* as if he had said, "I have no strength; nothing whereon to rest; nothing, wherewith to oppose; no resource of my own, or of man's devising, whereunto I may betake myself; because *my strength is weakness, my arm is feeble, the Lord,* therefore, *the Lord alone* according to His promise, *"is my strength."* This

* Deut. iv. 1. † Chron. xx. 20. ‡ 2 Cor. ix. 6.
§ Psalm xxxvii. 4.

§ "A praying Christian" says Tertullian, "is in a frame for enduring any thing." See Milner's Church History Chap. 2, text 3.

is the secret; if indeed we can call that *a secret*, which is openly proclaimed from Genesis to Revelation; if we can call that *a secret*, which has been sounding in our ears, and dwelling even on our tongues, from day to day, year after year; and if we can call that *a secret*, which we have so often professed to credit and acknowledge. But this is, has been, and still will be, the only foundation on which to rest for security; for "*they that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.*"* This is the lesson, which, by precept and example, David would teach us; he says, when he would show us *his resource*, in the time of trouble, *the joyful result* which he experienced, and *the reason* of this result, "*The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*"† No warrior was ever more completely armed for the battle, than is the Christian, the faithful soldier and servant of the Most High God: he wants nothing but faith in the virtue of his armour, to enable him to stand confident against the '*battailous aspect*' ‡ of the foes, against whom he is called to wrestle :§ he wants nothing, I say, but faith; for even *victory* is promised to him.

* Psalm cxxv. 1.

† Psalm xviii. 2. ‡ Milton.

§ See Ephesians vi. 12.

I testify, therefore unto you, my fellow-traveller, that *prayer* is the Believer's *resource* in the day of trouble; that rejoicing, inward rejoicing, arising from a firm faith and confidence in the providential and merciful dispensations of his Heavenly Father, is *the result,* the undoubted and necessary result of a sincere seeking this appointed resource; and that *the reason of all this* is, because *"The Lord God is his strength."* He disclaims, as unsafe, every other arm; he renounces his own sufficiency; abhors the idea of pleading any thing but the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and trusts to nothing for acceptance, save the merits and intercession of the same gracious Redeemer; he relies upon the covenant of grace, and is assured, by the terms of it, that there is a need-be for every trial; that *a prospective good* will arise from that which may seem a *present evil;* and that every cup is, in reality, deprived of its bitterness; every affliction, of its sting.

Now, as a practical conclusion, I desire to observe, that we may receive the subject which we have been considering, *as a test of our discipleship.* For if the words of the Prophet sound but strangely in our ears, we cannot but fear, that Christ is not yet made precious; that we have professed and believed *in vain.* It is undoubtedly the Believer's privilege to *"give thanks always for all things;"* to receive every thing from the hand of God without a murmur or sinful expression, yea, *even with thankfulness,* knowing that He who so loved us, as to give His only-

begotten Son to die for us, will not surely, with Him and for Him, not only not refuse to *give* us all things that are *needful* for us, but will not send any thing that shall be *hurtful* to us.* Try then yourself, dear Reader, by this test; and ask, "*In what way do I receive my present trial? do I perceive it to be a blessing? does the hand of God appear to be filled with wrath or with mercy? or am I indifferent, receiving my afflictions, as things common to man, for which there is no help?*" But I trust that there may be an inward witness within you, which, with confidence, will make answer and say, "*No; by the grace of God, it is not so with me now; I have joy, peace, and hope in believing; and the Apostle's direction is dear to me indeed, and perfectly intelligible, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.'*"†

* 'God,' saith St. Augustine, 'would not permit evil to exist, if He had not some greater good to bring out of it.'

† Phil. iv. 4.

XXIV.

ROMANS VIII. 35, 37.

WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? SHALL TRIBULATION, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, OR FAMINE, OR NAKEDNESS, OR PERIL, OR SWORD? NAY, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM THAT LOVED US.

In my preceding expositions of those rich words of consolation, with which the Word of God so abundantly teems, I have endeavoured, "*according to the good hand of my God upon me,*" to distribute unto *all* that comfort and encouragement, which they are intended to impart. I consider my Readers, as *sufferers,* and therefore in need of *consolation;* and I have occasionally warned them, that the promises are for the *exclusive* benefit of the children of God, as of some privileged and peculiar persons; wishing hereby to set them upon a diligent inquiry into, and an examination of, their state, in the sight of God. For God forbid that I should so far deceive any, as to hold out to them hopes, which they would fail to

realize, or point out to them blessings which were not intended for them while they remain aliens from God: and which, moreover, they would be unable to understand.

In commenting, however, on the words now before us, no such alternative is left me: for they are addressed to those who love, and are loved by Christ; who love Him, because He first loved them, and because He loved them, gave Himself for them: they are spoken of those, who "*have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry 'Abba, Father,'*" and with whose spirits, "*the Spirit itself beareth witness, that they are the children of God.*"*

But you may ask, 'Are *the children of God* subject to tribulation? will He suffer them to undergo the pains, and encounter the calamities, to which *other men* are heirs?' Let me observe in answer, that he who puts this question, knows nothing of the Bible, or of God's dealings with mankind; he is ignorant of the curse which is entailed on all the human race, by the sin of our first Parents; and he knows not, unhappily for himself, he knows not how, and by what means, the Lord is pleased to call into the number of His adopted, those whom He will. But that there *are* such, who, while in the flesh, are troubled, afflicted, and in tribulation, and who scarcely dare make use of their privilege, or rejoice in their sonship, the Scriptures abundantly testify:

* Rom. viii. 15, 16.

they testify this, not only in the direct, positive History of many, to whom God has borne witness that they were His; but also the fact, that there are promises of strength in their time of need, and of final victory in every contest, abundantly proves this.*

To such then, in humble and unfeigned dependence on the Spirit of truth, I proceed to unfold the triumphant and exulting language of the Apostle. Come ye, laying aside your fears, casting away your doubts; come with humility, and a persuasive belief of your unworthiness and self-insufficiency, as the best antidote against an ill-grounded confidence and presuming licentiousness. It is not my wish, (far indeed be that from the mind of one, who would rather mourn in *gloomy despondency* all his days, than boast in *vain-glorious assurance;* the former may be raised to *enjoyment*, the latter must be made to descend *in despair*) it is not my wish, I repeat, to excite in you too high a degree of rejoicing; nor do I desire that you should follow where I am not authorized to lead you. But it is my heart's desire,

* "The promises," observes Newton, in a letter to a friend, "are generally made to an afflicted state; and we could not taste their sweetness, nor experience their truth, if we were not sometimes brought into the circumstances to which they relate. It is said, '*I will be with them in trouble;*' but how could we know what a mercy is contained in these words, unless trouble was sometimes our lot? It is said to be the believer's privilege to glory in tribulation: but we never could know that this is possible, without we had tribulation to glory in."

and my prayer to God, that I may be instrumental in causing your heart to burn within you, and your "*spirit to rejoice in God your Saviour.*"

For this purpose, consider the very confident language which St. Paul uses: it is of two kinds; the first verse is *negative;* the second, *strictly positive.* The figure of speech which we have in the former, is of frequent occurrence in the sacred writers: in the Psalms, especially, we find it; as, for instance, when David sustains his faith, by declaring, "*The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?*"* he boldly asserts that none shall make him afraid, and that no human being shall be able to excite any alarm. Again, when the Psalmist would praise God for His wonderful power, He says, "*O Lord, God of Hosts, who is a strong Lord, like Thee?*"† it is as if he had said, "*Lord, there is none like unto Thee.*" When we read in Isaiah, the question of the Lord, "*Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?*"‡ we find in the same Word, the reply, "*Behold, the Lord's hand is* NOT *shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear.*"§ And thus it is that the Apostle, in the fulness of his faith, in an abiding sense of the constraining and enduring love of Christ, exclaims, "*who shall sepa-*

* Psalm xxvii. 1.
† Ibid. lxxxix. 8.
‡ Isaiah l. 2.
§ Ibid. lix. 1.

rate us from the love of Christ?" as if he laboured to assure his weaker brethren, that no one should be able to separate Christ's love from His people, and that no power should *"pluck them out of His hand;"* for *"having loved His own—He loved, (and will love) them unto the end."** Again, he asks, knowing that tribulation and sorrow are the appointed portion of all, more or less; and that the children of God enjoy not an immunity from them, *"shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"* They shall not. Now surely, if any one were warranted in speaking thus confidently, no man more than he who here does so; he speaks experimentally—it is even he, who could refer back to his trials, with a joyful recollection and grateful acknowledgment of the mercy which delivered him from them." *"Persecutions,"* he says *"afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me."*† Had he been separated from the love of Christ, doubtless he would have sunk beneath the weight of his trials, and yielded in despair, to their oppression.

But we have yet a stronger proof of the ever-present love of our Saviour: St. Paul unhesitatingly *denies* that afflictions are able to separate us from His love; He has yet *a positive* encouragement to produce; *"Nay,"* says he, *"in all these things we*

* John xiii. 1. † 2 Tim. iii. 11.

are more than conquerors." I confess that this language, any where but in the word of God, proceeding any where but from the lips of one, who, with the other holy men of God, *"spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost,"** would require much corroboration to attest its authenticity: but here, we cannot doubt; *to doubt, is sin.* Truly it is accounted a great thing to be *a conqueror;* but to be *more than a conqueror,* has something super-human in the idea, something indeed beyond human *attainment,* but not beyond *enjoyment,* because it is God who bestows what Christ has obtained for His people; it is God who bestows it upon such, and therefore, by His Spirit, enables them to *enjoy* this super-human victory.

Now observe how strong and comprehensive are the terms used! they embrace every possible calamity which can possibly befall us, every kind of affliction which can ever come upon us: *"in all these things;"* in all what things? *in tribulation, in distress, in persecution, in famine, in destitution, in peril, in suffering from the sword,* we shall, if we be Christ's, come out from the fiery trial, *"more than conquerors, through Him that loved us:"* it shall be said, as it was said of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we *"saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had*

* 2 Peter i. 21.

*passed on them;"** and all shall *"take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus."*† God knows how little are *our* trials, in comparison of any here spoken of; how small and insignificant our afflictions! what little persecution, if any, we endure; and that we know nothing of famine, destitution, peril, or of *"resisting, unto blood;"*‡ yet in *our light afflictions*, He grants unto us to *"come off more than conquerors!"*

It will not now be amiss to enquire, what it means by *not being "separated from the love of Christ;"* and what is to be understood by being *"more than conquerors."* First then, in every trial which may be sent to us, by constant, earnest, wrestling prayer;§ by a close, frequent and diligent, application to, and meditation upon, the precious legacy left us in the word of God; and by an earnest, stedfast, and habitual *"looking unto Jesus, as the Author and*

* Dan. iii. 27. † Acts iv. 13. ‡ Heb. xii. 4.

§ Bishop Jeremy Taylor, in a beautiful simile, describes the power of *wrestling prayer*, its singleness of object, and perseverance in pursuit; thus, "The river that runs slow, and creeps by the banks, and begs leave of every turf to let it pass, is drawn into little hollownesses, and spends itself in smaller portions, and dies with diversion: *but when it runs with vigoursness and a full stream, and beats down every obstacle, making it even as its own brow, it stays not to be tempted by little avocations, and to creep into holes, but runs into the sea, through full and useful channels. So is man's prayer;* if it moves upon the feet of an abated appetite, it wanders into the society of every trifling accident, and stays at the corners of the fancy, and talks with every object it meets, *and cannot arrive at Heaven.*" Sermon xiv.

*Finisher of our faith,"** we shall be enabled, by Him, *to endure through them all,* as seeing Him, who, though as yet invisible to mortal eye, is discernible by the eye of faith, at the right hand of God, making intercession for us: thus engaged, we shall be sure to find our souls rising far above all worldly things; raised high upon the mount of God's unchanging love, we shall look down upon the transient things of time, "*knowing in ourselves, that we have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance,*"† and look calmly on our cares, our sorrows, and our crosses; we shall regard with love and gratitude, and holy joy, while we wait with faith inflexible and earnest expectation, the full fruition of that love, of which we have some foretaste here, and the bestowment of that crown which shall be ours for evermore. Indeed I know not what there is, which *can* separate us from the love of Christ: *man* cannot; for Christ says, "*your joy no man taketh from you:*"‡ *the world* cannot, for Christ bids us be of good cheer, since He has *overcome* the world:§ and as the world did not bestow Christ's love upon us, it has not the power to take it away: and *our afflictions* cannot; for they shall work together for our good, and "*work out also for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*"‖ As then it is with the trees of the

* Heb. xii. 2. † Ibid. x. 34.
‡ John xvi. 22. § Ibid. xvi. 33.
‖ 2 Cor. iv. 17. This may require some little qualification, in order to correct a false notion, very prevalent among the

forest, the more violently the storm beats against them, the more deeply and firmly do their roots adhere to the soil which nourishes them; so when the storm of life assails, *"like a wild deluge,"* the adopted child of God, and heir of glory, through Christ, *the stronger is his faith, the more enlarged his love, the more abiding his confidence;* though his outward man perish, his inward man is renewed.§

Lastly, and in few words, the Christian is *more than conqueror,* for his victory is more than human: man conquers man; but to triumph over affliction, to glory in infirmities, to rejoice in our sorrows! these demand a term to depict the conquest, something beyond the common acceptation: we can only conceive the magnitude of the idea, *by comparison:*

ignorant and unrenewed; they think, that *because* they are *afflicted here, therefore they shall be eternally happy hereafter,* as a recompense for their sufferings! indeed, I have known this text to be cited in attestation of this monstrous idea. Nothing can be more clear, than that the Apostle speaks of afflictions, as *the means* by which God makes us *"partakers of His holiness,"* (Heb. xii. 10.) that they are, as we may say, ordained by Him, as *the path,* and appointed as *the preparation* for the enjoyment of heaven.

* George Herbert, the pious author of "The Country Parson," beautifully expresses the same idea; he says,

"Affliction then is ours;
We are the Trees, whom shaking fastens more,
Whilst blustring winds destroy the wanton bowrs,
And ruffle all their curious knots and store;
My God, so temper joy and woe
That Thy bright beams may tame Thy bow."

THE CHURCH, page 117.

St. Paul called himself "*less than the least of all saints:*"* he speaks of God as being "*able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think:*"† what should we think of the expression "*higher than the highest?*" or of the words which Milton puts into the mouth of Satan,

'*And in* THE LOWEST *deep,* A LOWER *deep.*'‡

So must we judge of ourselves as "*more than conquerors:*" it is a feeling, which can be properly conceived, or duly appreciated, by those only who, through grace, can bear witness to its consolations by repeated enjoyment. To such it is cheering, because indeed, they know Him who has said, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,*" § even He by whom it is that they are more than conquerors, and "*who always causeth us to triumph in Christ.*"‖

What more can we say to these things? What could the love of God, in Christ Jesus, do more for us than He has done? Go then, thou afflicted, yet

* Ephes. iii. 8. † Ephes. iii. 20.

‡ Paradise Lost iv. 76.

§ Hebrews xiii. 5. There is much encouragement in this promise: "the words seem to be quoted from the Lord's address to Joshua, (Joshua i. 5.) though nearly the same are used in several parts of Scripture. They however evidently shew, that *every believer in similar circumstances, may rely upon the promises made specially to any person, as recorded in the Scripture.*' —SCOTT.

‖ 2 Cor. ii. 14.

more than conquering believer; thou sorrowing, yet really *rejoicing* sufferer, lift up thy grateful heart to God in adoration, and say with St. Paul, "*I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"*

GLORY TO GOD.

* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

APPENDIX.

SEEK YE OUT OF THE BOOK OF THE LORD AND READ. Isaiah xxxiv. 16.

Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. Jeremiah xv. 16.

All I can do, is, to go from text to text, as a bird from spray to spray. CECIL.

1. The Lord heareth the poor, and *despiseth not His prisoners.* Psalm lxix. 33.

2. *Hearken unto me,* ye that know righteousness the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not *the reproach of men,* neither be ye afraid of their *revilings.* Isaiah lv. 7.

3. Take heed, and *be quiet;* fear not, neither be *faint-heart.* Isaiah vii. 4.

4. *Wait on the Lord;* be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: *wait, I say on the Lord.* Psalm xxvii. 14.

5. Let not your heart be *troubled,* neither let it be *afraid.* John xiv. 27.

6. I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak *peace unto His people,* and to His saints. Psalm lxxxv. 8.

7. And they that know Thy name, will put their trust in Thee: for, *Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.* Psalm ix. 10.

8. The Lord is *good* unto them that *wait* for Him, to the soul that *seeketh* Him. Lamentations iii. 25.

9. We are *troubled* on every side, yet *not distressed;* we are *perplexed,* but *not in despair; persecuted,* but *not forsaken; cast down,* but *not destroyed.* 2 Corinthians iv. 8. 9.

10. No weapon that is formed against thee shall *prosper;* and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shall *condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.* Isaiah liv. 17.

11. They that sow in *tears,* shall reap in *joy.* Psalm cxxvi. 5.

12. Draw nigh to God, and *He will draw nigh to you.* James iv. 8.

13. Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath *torn,* and He will *heal* us: He hath *smitten, and He will bind us up.* Hosea vi. 1.

14. The fear of man bringeth *a snare;* but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, *shall be safe.* Prov. xxix, 25.

15. If this counsel, or this work be of *man,* it will come to *nought:* but if it be of *God, ye cannot overthrow it.* Acts v. 38, 39.

16. I will say of the Lord, He is my *refuge*, and my *fortress:* my God, *in Him will I trust.* Psalm xci. 2.

17. Behold! we count them happy which *endure:* ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that *the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.* James v. 11.

18. He maketh the storm *a calm,* so that *the waves* thereof are *still.* Psalm cvii. 29.

19. Behold! in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that *God is greater than man.* Job xxxiii. 12.

20. Nevertheless, for Thy great mercies' sake, Thou didst not *utterly* consume them, nor *forsake* them; for *Thou art a gracious and merciful God.* Nehemiah ix. 31.

21. And He spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought *always to pray, and not to faint.* Luke xviii. 1.

22. Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: *Thou wilt prepare their heart; Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear.* Psalm x. 17.

23. I will cause you to pass *under the rod,* and I will bring you into *the bond of the Covenant.* Ezekiel xx. 35.

24. For *the Lord will not forsake His people,* for His great name's sake. 1 Samuel xii. 22.

25. They that *wait* upon the Lord, shall *renew their strength*: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall *run, and not be weary;* and they shall *walk, and not faint.* Isaiah xl. 31.

26. For a small moment have I *forsaken* thee, but with great mercies *will I gather thee;* in a little wrath, *I hid my face from thee* for a moment, but with *everlasting kindness,* will I have *mercy* on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. Isaiah liv. 7, 8.

27. *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee;* be strong, and of good courage. Joshua i. 5, 6.

28. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for *the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest.* Joshua i. 9.

29. Behold, I, even I, will both *search* my sheep and *seek them out:* I will *seek* that which was *lost,* and will *bring again* that which was *driven away;* and will *bind up* that which was *broken,* and will *strengthen* that which was *sick.* Ezekiel xxxiv. 11, 16.

30. He giveth *power to the faint;* and to them that have *no might,* He increaseth *strength.* Isaiah xl. 29.

31. He will *regard* the prayer of the destitute, and *not despise their prayer.* Psalm cii. 17.

32. The Lord do that which seemeth *Him good.* 2 Samuel x. 12.

33. We are chastened of the Lord, *that we should not be condemned with the world.* 1 Corinthians xi. 32.

34. I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are *right,* and that Thou *in faithfulness hast afflicted me.* Psalm cxix. 75.

35. Therefore I will look unto the Lord: I will

wait for the God of my salvation; *my God will hear me.* Micah vii. 7.

36. And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you; and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for *the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for Him.* Isaiah xxx. 18.

37. *They that trust in the Lord,* shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. Psalm cxxv. 1.

38. O Lord, I know that the way of man is not *in himself; it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.* Jeremiah x. 23.

39. For Thou hast been *a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat,* when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Isaiah xxv. 4.

40. They that war against thee, shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. *For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand,* saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee. Isaiah xli. 12, 13.

41. Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; *In returning and rest* shall ye be saved; *in quietness and confidence* shall be your strength. Isaiah xxx. 15.

42. *The eternal God is thy refuge;* and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. Deuteronomy xxxiii. 27.

43. For the Lord will not cast off *for ever*: But though He cause *grief*, yet will He have *compassion*, according to the multitude of His mercies. Lamentations iii. 31, 32.

44. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, *to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them*, whose heart is perfect towards Him. 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

45. *Many* are the afflictions of the righteous; but *the Lord delivereth him out of them all.* Psalm xxxiv. 19.

46. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and *He knoweth them that trust in Him.* Nahum. i. 7.

47. Thus saith the Lord; *Cursed* be the man that trusteth *in man*, and maketh *flesh* his arm, and whose heart *departeth* from the Lord—*Blessed* is the man that *trusteth* in the Lord, and whose hope *the Lord is.* Jeremiah xvii. 5, 7.

48. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which Thou has caused me to hope. *This is my comfort in my affliction, for Thy Word hath quickened me.* Psalm cxix. 49, 50.

49. They shall *fight* against thee, but they shall not *prevail* against thee; for *I am with thee*, saith the Lord, *to deliver thee.* Jeremiah i. 19.

50. *Art Thou not from everlasting*, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. Habak. i. 12.

51. Thou, which hast shewed me *great and sore troubles*, shalt *quicken* me again, and shalt *bring me*

up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt *increase* my greatness, and *comfort* me on every side. Psalm lxxi. 20, 21.

52. He hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath He *hid His face* from him; but *when He cried unto Him He heard.* Psalm xxii. 24.

53. I will *wait* upon the Lord, *that hideth His face* from the house of Jacob, and I will *look for Him.* Isaiah xxvii. 9.

54. By this therefore shall *the iniquity* of Jacob *be purged;* and this is all the fruit *to take away his sin.* Isaiah xxvii. 9.

55. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings,* his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Psalm cxii. 6, 7.

56. Be strong, and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, *He it is that doth go with thee:* He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Deut. xxxi. 6.

57. Lord, Thou *wilt* ordain peace for us; for Thou also *hast* wrought all our works in us. Isaiah xxvi. 12.

58. As many as I love, *I rebuke and chasten.* Rev. iii. 19.

59. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. *Trust in Him at all times;* ye people, *pour out your heart* before Him. God is *a refuge* for us. Psalm lxii. 7, 8.

60. Turn thou to thy God, and *wait* on thy God *continually*. Hosea xxii. 6.

61. *I know* the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, *thoughts of peace, and not of evil,* to give you an expected end. Jerem. xxix. 11.

62. What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? *Ask, and ye shall receive,* that your joy may be full. Luke xviii. 31; John xvi. 24.

63. Be not afraid; *only believe.* Mark v. 36.

64. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I *deliver* him. I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. *He shall call upon me,* and *I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble:* I will deliver him, and honour him. Psalm xci. 14, 15.

65. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and *He shall sustain thee.* He shall never suffer the righteous *to be moved.* Psalm lv. 22.

66. The beloved of the Lord shall *dwell in safety by Him.* Deut. xxxiii. 12.

67. For we were *bondmen:* yet our God *hath not forsaken us in our bondage,* but hath extended mercy unto us. Ezra ix. 9.

68. And God said, *Ask what I shall give thee.* 1 Kings iii. 5.

69. When my spirit was in heaviness, *Thou knewest my path.* Psalm cxlii. 3. (P. B. version.)

70. *In the way of Thy judgments,* O Lord, have we *waited* for Thee. Isaiah xxvi. 8.

71. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and

delivered me from all my fears. Psalm xxxiv. 4.

72. The Lord will give *strength* unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with *peace.* Psalm xxix. 11.

73. And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents, which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, *The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.* 2 Chron. xxv. 9.

74. Oh! how great is Thy goodness which Thou has laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that *trust in Thee before the sons of men.* Psalm xxxi. 19.

75. The Lord is our Judge: the Lord is our Lawgiver: the Lord is our King: *He will save us.* Isaiah xxxiii. 22.

76. He knoweth the way that I take; *when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.* Job. xxiii. 10.

77. Let the weak say, *I am strong.* Joel iii. 10.

78. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh! that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And *God granted him that which he requested.* 1 Chron. iv. 10.

79. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that *remember Thee in Thy ways.* Isaiah lxiv, 5.

80. And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and

said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God, *let not man prevail against Thee. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah.* 2 Chron. xiv. 11, 12.

81. Commit thy works unto the Lord, and *thy thoughts shall be established.* Prov. xvi. 3.

82. In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, *to the end that man should find nothing after Him.* Eccles. vii. 14.

83. In the fear of the Lord *is strong confidence;* and His children shall have *a place of refuge.* Prov. xiv. 26.

84. Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long: for surely *there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off.* Prov. xxiii. 17, 18.

85. *Evil* men understand not *judgment;* but they that seek the Lord, *understand all things.* Proverbs xxviii. 5.

86. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so *the Lord is round about His people* from henceforth even for ever. Psalm cxxv. 2.

87. If thou canst believe, *all things are possible to him that believeth.* Mark ix. 23.

88. The people that do *know their God, shall be strong,* and do exploits. Daniel xi. 32.

89. *I said in my haste,* I am cut off from before Thine eyes: *nevertheless,* Thou heardest the voice of my supplications, when I cried unto Thee. Psalm xxxi. 22.

90. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; *is there any thing too hard for me?* Jeremiah xxxii. 26, 27.

91. I am filled with comfort, *I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.* 2 Cor. vii. 4.

92. I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy; for Thou hast considered my trouble: *Thou hast known my soul in adversities.* Psalm xxxi. 7.

93. Hear ye the rod, and *who* hath appointed it. Micah vi. 9.

94. *Ye shall know* that I have not done *without cause* all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God. Ezek. xiv. 23.

95. My God shall supply *all your need,* according to His riches, in glory, by Christ Jesus. Philip. iv. 19.

96. Do not my words *do good* to him that walketh uprightly? Micah ii. 7.

97. Then thought I to understand this; but it was too hard for me, *until I went into the sanctuary of God.* Psalm lxxiii. 15, 16. (P. B. version).

98. But now, O Lord, *Thou art our Father*: we are *the clay,* and *Thou our potter;* and we are all the work of Thy hand. Isaiah lxiv. 8.

99. The more they *afflicted* them, the more they *multiplied and grew*. Exodus i. 12.

100. And he said to his servant, Go up now, look towards the sea. And he went up and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, *Go again seven times*. 1 Kings xviii. 43.

THE END.

S. W. Theakston, Printer, 31, Long Room Street, Scarborough

By the same Author, in 12*mo., price* 4*s.* 6*d.,*

THE LAW AND GOSPEL;

A COURSE OF SIXTEEN SERMONS ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

"The present work is a compendious and valuable series of Discourses upon the Decalogue, at once simple and heart-searching in its appeals—each effort embodying an abstract of Christian doctrine, such as it seldom falls to our lot to recommend. We consider it a publication calculated to be extremely useful in Parochial libraries." *Protestant Journal, March,* 1833.

Also, price 1*s.* 6*d.,*

A PRACTICAL ANSWER TO THE QUESTION,

"WHAT IS POPERY?"

"Well worthy the serious consideration of those persons, unfortunately not few in number, who imagine that Protestantism and Popery are two forms, nearly upon a par, of common Christianity. The pamphlet before us will shew that there is a mighty gulf betwixt them." *Church of England Magazine.*